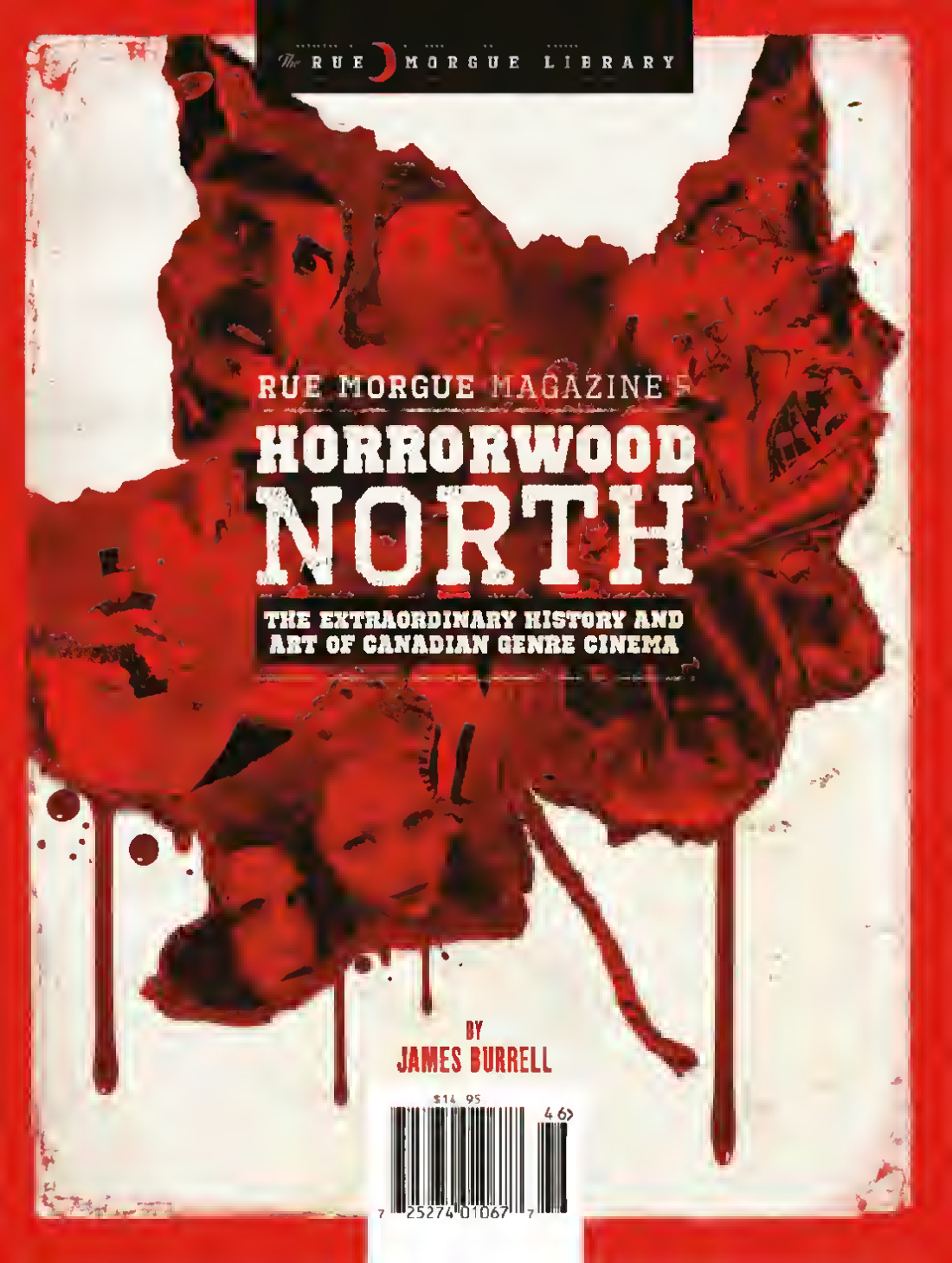

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Horrorwood North is dedicated to my father George, uncle Bob and Sadegh. You are missed

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FOREWORD

BROWN AND ORANGE PATTERNED CARPET. IT DECORATED THE HALLWAYS LIKE A PAISLEY RASH IN THE TORONTO APARTMENT COMPLEX WHERE I GREW UP – an abstract bridge between the psychedelic '60s and the emerging order of '70s futurism. The buildings themselves were, despite their Soviet-style brutality, an inviting, middle-class community that seemed designed to embrace the brand of socialism that was fashionable at the time. And though only a child, I intuited that they were emblematic of Canada, a young country with promise, somehow free of the violence and malaise that gripped our post-Watergate/Vietnam American cousins to the south.

Who would suspect that this shiny new world I inhabited would prove to be such fertile ground for horror? Certainly no one at the time would ever think that the kinds of films produced in Toronto and other parts of English Canada in the late '70s and early '80s were anything more than the most turgid kind of exploitation. And yet here we are in the new millennium, still feeling the cultural reverberations of *Black Christmas*, *Shivers* and *The Changeling*.

Though products of their time, these films still resonate and in some cases appear more shocking and forward-thinking now than when they were first released. Certainly, their legacy is not only felt here at home, but also across the globe. An argument could be made that the *Saw* films, *Let the Right One In*, *Slither*, *Hostel*, *Insidious* and a host of others are all consciously, or by osmosis, indebted to them.

Ironically, these films, which were perceived as an embarrassment in their native country, were the product of a cultural initiative. The Canadian government, in an attempt to jumpstart the nascent theatrical film industry, offered a tax shelter to anyone who wanted to invest in a theatrical feature. Dentists and lawyers became producers overnight. And even people such as my grandmother were putting their retirement savings into films such as *Rock & Rule* and *Middle Age Crazy*. The result was a highly corrupt financing system that produced many unreleasable films and a lot of crap. But from this primordial soup emerged some truly beautiful and unforgettable monstrosities.

Often derided for being poorly acted and technically crude, films such as *My Bloody Valentine* are distinctly stark, raw and brutal. Moreover, they possess an overwhelming sense of existential dread and moral indifference that distinguishes them from the Hollywood paradigm. They are cold, not simply because they are set against the backdrop of a Northern climate, but because of their clinical ambience. We feel perversely voyeuristic and apart from the characters on the screen. There is a pervasive sense of self-reflexivity, an awareness that the filmmaker is questioning his or her own motives. It is a distinctly introspective approach to the genre.

I doubt that many of the filmmakers involved were consciously aware of any of this; in many cases they were out of their way to disguise their Canadian origins. But the cultural subtleties that separate Canada from the US were irrepressible and shine through the international casting and the phony Americanisms, forming an uncanny valley that only serves to define them as something strange and distinctly *un-American*.

To understand what distinguishes Canadian culture from American culture, one has to go back to the origins of the country. Much of Canada was populated by Loyalists



who abandoned America before the revolution. And as an active member of the Commonwealth, Canada remains in spirit very much connected to the British Empire. Rather than violently rebelling against its parent country, though, Canada won its independence through legal means. It tamed its Western provinces with the Mounted Police. It is a peaceable society that values the collective over the individual. The result is a culture that both envies and derides American individualism, finding it easier to define itself by what it is *not* rather than by what it *is*. All this is to say that beneath the gentle Canadian exterior lies seething insecurity.

This might seem like a cultural disadvantage, but in the realm of horror, which thrives on shaking the foundations of stability and normalcy, it is a definite plus. And it is probably why Canadian horror tends to play on a keen awareness of social discomfort and anxiety. This is in contrast to French Canada, which has a highly evolved sense of cultural identity with a healthy indigenous film industry, but which has failed to produce more than a handful of horror films. Canadian horror is distinctly not Catholic. It comes from the drabness of the repressed Protestant psyche.

This brings me back to that splotchy patterned rug. Many years after I moved away from home I saw that same carpet, or a close facsimile thereof, in David Cronenberg's first commercial feature, *Shivers*. Set in an apartment complex of the same style and vintage as my own, the symmetrical hallways and stark grid of the building's facade felt like images lifted from my own childhood. So too did the swinging, progressive, intellectual residents who, in true Cronenbergian fashion, seemed as enraptured as they were horrified by the parasitic organisms that invaded their homes and their bodies.

Shivers, or as it is also known by its more relevant US title, *They Came From Within*, could be seen as a microcosm for Canadian society as a whole: diverse, polite, subsisting comfortably in a modest yet stylish existence, all while primal anti-social urges, which lurk just beneath that benign surface, are primed to explode.

Cronenberg's influence looms large with an unparalleled resume of seminal works. He is to body horror what Pablo Picasso is to cubism. And like Picasso, he is more than just that form, and the form is more than just him. Internal horror has been adopted and reinterpreted by many other artists. In his wake, another generation of filmmakers, who with more recent fare such as *Ginger Snaps*, *Pontypool*, *Beyond the Black Rainbow*, *Antiviral* and *American Mary*, have adopted and mutated these obsessions to become their own.

This book serves as a chronicle of this evolving culture. Like anything as spontaneous and ephemeral as an artistic movement, it is hard to define and harder to predict where it is headed. But one thing is clear: the new wave have embraced their Canadian-ness with considerably more verve and audacity than their predecessors. While in the past there may have been a modicum of shame in being a Canadian horror director, today there is a newfound pride in the predilections of our native land – surely a sign of maturity and willingness to happily exist outside the mainstream, and to embrace the darker, colder spaces where horror is most at home.

VINCENZO NATALI



INTRODUCTION

IT MAY BE SURPRISING TO LEARN, BUT CANADA HAS AN IMPRESSIVE TRACK RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO PRODUCING HORROR MOVIES. Since the country's first full-length horror film (1961's *The Mask*), Canadians have produced some of the most fascinating, provocative, offbeat and revered fright flicks ever made.

That's why *Rue Morgue* is devoting its fourth supplement to the world of Canadian genre cinema. Within the pages of *Horrorwood North* you'll find interviews with some of the most influential figures in Canadian horror – the directors, writers, producers, actors and composers who have put Canada on the horror-movie map. You'll find spotlights on some of most striking films from the Canuck horror canon, plus dozens of reviews and much more.



But you might be asking yourself, "What's so special about Canadian genre fare?"

At first glance, our horror movies don't seem very far removed from their American counterparts. But Canadian fright films are products of a very different culture, and the distinctions are fascinating.

For starters, Canuck chillers are less interested in traditional monsters such as vampires and werewolves – though, of course, these creatures are represented in a handful of films, including *Blood & Donuts*, *Graveyard Shift*, the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy and *WolfCop*. Mummies are practically non-existent in Canadian horror cinema, and the Northern exploits of the Frankenstein family have so far been limited to *Frankenstein on Campus*. Our oeuvre is similarly light on zombie flicks, though we've got *The Corpse Grinders*, *Graveyard Alive: A Zombie Nurse in Love* and *Fido* (and possibly *Pontypool*, depending on your definition of the word "zombie").

Canadian movie monsters are more likely to be of the man-made variety. We seem to be particularly nervous about science and medicine, judging from the outbreak of lab-grown parasites, viruses and mutations that have infested our screens, including much of David Cronenberg's work. Another recurring theme in Canuck horror is the onset of insanity or the loss of self-control, as seen in *The Mask*, *Deranged* and *Pin: A Plastic Nightmare*. To be fair, we do have a fondness for demons, which show up in such releases as *The Incubus*, *The Gate* and *Rock 'n' Roll Nightmare*.

Canada's landscape – dense forests, raging



rivers, snow-covered expanses – and harsh weather have also been well utilized in a number of shockers, including *Rituals*, *Ghostkeeper* and *Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning*. Characters in those films not only have to fend off homicidal war vets, flesh-eating Wendigos and shapeshifting werewolves, respectively, but also an unforgiving Mother Nature.

Quite a few slashers have hacked their way out of the Grisly White North, as well, but we don't have unstoppable killing machines like Michael Myers and Jason Voorhees. Our slasher villains tend to be dispatched before the end credits roll, and do not return for an endless parade of sequels. (An exception is the homicidal ghost of Mary Lou Maloney, who shows up in both *Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night 2* and *Prom Night III: The Last Kiss*.)



The Author

As a kid back in the 1970s, I grew up watching Universal monster movies, the Vincent Price AIP films, Hammer Horror and Amicus anthology flicks from England. I was introduced to Canuck horror with the network TV premiere of *Prom Night* in 1981. Later, via cable TV network First Choice, I was able to catch a number of Northern-lensed flicks such as *The Brood*, *Shivers*, *Visiting Hours*, *Curtains*, and many others.

I would eventually have the opportunity to write about some of those films when I penned features about *Prom Night*, *My Bloody Valentine* and *Happy Birthday to Me* for *Rue Morgue*. Writing the articles rekindled my interest in the maple syrup shockers I had grown up watching and I began thinking about the possibility of working on a book-length project on Canadian horror films – of which there was only one other example available at the time: Caelum Vatnsdal's fantastic *They Came From Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema*, published in 2004 (the invaluable Canadian B-movie-themed canuxploitation.com, founded by fellow *Rue Morgue* writer Paul Corupe, has also been in existence since 1999). In 2009 I began reaching out to directors, writers, producers, actors, set designers and composers to get their stories on the making of these often overlooked gems. The volume you hold in your hands is the result of that work. I hope you enjoy it.

Oh, and please understand that this is by no means a definitive look at Canadian horror; that would require a much heftier volume than the one you're holding. That said, I hope it whets your appetite for all things cinematically grim in the Great White North.

JAMES BURRELL



CHAPTER 1



THE PRE-TAX SHELTER YEARS (1961 - 1973)

THE HISTORY OF CANADIAN HORROR IS FASCINATING, BUT IT'S NOT PARTICULARLY LENGTHY Apart from a 1913 short film titled *The Werewolf* (now considered a lost film, unfortunately) by pioneering Toronto-born filmmaker Henry MacRae, Canucks did not become involved in the horror scene until the early 1960s.

Canada's filmmaking history dates back to 1897 with a series of shorts made by a Manitoba farmer named James Freer. There was a flurry of film production over the next two decades, including hits of the day such as *Back to God's Country* (1919) from prolific Canadian producer Ernest Shipman. Next came numerous "quota quickies" – cheaply-produced films from American producers that were shot in Canada in the 1920s and '30s in order to take advantage of a quota system in England that gave preference to British films (including those filmed in Canada, as the country was then part of the British Empire). After changes in British quota legislation in the late '30s excluded Canadian movies, feature film production in Canada all but dried up.

The country then turned its sights to documentaries and educational films, many of which would be made by the National Film Board of Canada, or NFB (briefly known as the National Film Commission). The NFB was established in 1939 to coordinate film production in Canada, but soon moved into creating propaganda films supporting the war effort. After WWII, the Board turned to documentary and short film production, and it was such output that earned Canada's film industry a reputation throughout the world.

When the country's first full-length shocker finally flickered across screens, it came in the form of the 1961 3-D offering *The Mask*, directed by veteran NFB filmmaker Julian Roffman. It would be five years before another Canuck horror film was released. 1966's *The Playgirl Killer*, a lurid tale of an artist who kills the women who model for him. The following year would see *The Vulture* (1967), a science-gone-awry flick in which a professor is turned into a half-man/half-bird being.

Canada rang in the next decade with the 1970 horror-comedy *Frankenstein on Campus* (a.k.a. *Flick*), which has a young descendent of the mad scientist experimenting on his fellow students while enrolled at the University of Toronto. Cult-themed films such as *The Reincarnate* (1971) and *The Possession of Virginia* (1972) would follow, as would the sex-tinged possession/haunted-house flick *A Name for Evil* (1973). Two of the most memorable releases of the era were Bob Clark's 1972 anti-Vietnam zombie offering, *Deathdream* (a.k.a. *Dead of Night*) and Alan Ormsby and Jeff Gillen's *Deranged* (1974, shot in '73), a chilling take on the crimes of Ed Gein.



THE MASK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR CLAUDETTE NEVINS

THIS IS IT – THE FILM THAT STARTED IT ALL. CANADA'S VERY FIRST FEATURE-LENGTH HORROR MOVIE, 1961's black-and-white *The Mask*, is a little-known flick that has never achieved the popularity or recognition it deserves. Besides being the first Canuck horror film ever made, it's also the first Canadian-produced movie to achieve widespread distribution by a large American studio, it's the first Canadian film to be shot in 3-D, and finally, it is arguably still one of the strangest, most inventive flicks ever to come out of Horrorwood North.

The Mask begins with a young woman being chased by a man through a wooded area and then strangled. The next day, the same young man, one Michael Radin (Martin Lavut), visits his psychiatrist, Dr. Allan Barnes (Paul Stevens) and agitatedly tells the doctor he's having recollections of killing a woman – and that an ancient tribal mask compelled him to do it. But Barnes tries to minimize Radin's concerns, and the young man angrily bursts out of the doctor's office.

Back at his apartment, Radin packs the grotesque, skull-like mask into a box and instructs his landlady to mail the parcel to Barnes; Radin then commits suicide. Later, when examining the body, police learn that Radin was an archeologist and worked at a local museum. Lieutenant Martin (Bill Walker) speaks with one of the curators, Dr. Soames (Leo Leyden), who tells him Radin had taken home artifacts from a South American expedition in order to catalogue them. Because the items are so rare and presumably valuable, Martin suspects the young men might have been robbed and murdered. A search of Radin's apartment reveals one of the artifacts – an ancient ritual mask – is missing, and Soames informs Martin of a legend associated with it: the object supposedly has the power to put its wearer into a trance and force that person to do "cruel, unnatural things."

Barnes subsequently receives Radin's package, and upon opening it finds it also contains a suicide note, along with a challenge – which is conveyed via a voice-over from Radin – to "Put the mask on now! Put the mask on now!" (The voice-over also acted as a signal for audience members to hold up their theatre-issued anaglyph 3-D placard masks.)

His curiosity aroused, Barnes does just that, and experiences a hallucination whereby he is transported into a bizarre, mist-filled netherworld where an alternate version of himself (played by mime Rudi Linschoten) makes his way through a strange, cavernous environment filled with stone pillars with protruding arms. He encounters a trio of masked, shrouded figures who sacrifice a young woman on a stone altar while a giant version of the ancient ritual skull mask floats above them.

Barnes' girlfriend, Pamela (Claudette Nevins) arrives to find him on the floor of his office, and he tells her the mask must have revealed something hidden deep within his subconscious. She wants him to return the morbid artifact, but he explains that it has great importance to the world of psychiatry and that he intends to keep and study it. When

Lobby card



Pamela suggests that he seek guidance from his mentor, Professor Quincy, Barnes becomes hostile and she flees with the mask, returning it to the museum. Barnes manages to locate the grotesque, grinning object and brings it back with him, where he's compelled to don it again and again. But in addition to the nightmarish visions it produces – which now include a skull-headed figure shooting fireballs at him, giant snakes and a voyage down a bone- and limb-filled river in a coffin – the mask also unleashes his repressed and increasingly violent impulses.

Directed and co-produced by well-respected National Film Board (NFB) documentary filmmaker Julian Roffman, *The Mask* was the second feature from Taylor-Roffman Productions, which Roffman formed with producing partner Nat Taylor and Taylor's wife, Yvonne. (The company's first project was a 1959 thriller titled *The Bloody Brood*, starring Peter Falk as a sadistic, drug-dealing thug who hangs out at beatnik clubs and commits such nasty deeds as giving a glass-laced hamburger to a delivery boy to eat.) The Montreal-born Roffman had previously worked on the *March of Time* series of newsreel programs in the US. He also helmed army recruitment films and a number of documentaries for the NFB before co-founding prolific production company Meridian Films, which, in 1959, became the first company to introduce videotape to Canada. It was due in part to Roffman's credentials that actress Claudette Nevins agreed to star in the film.

"I knew of Julian's reputation in the film industry," recalls Nevins, who, in addition to film and television credits, has appeared on Broadway alongside the likes of George C. Scott and Maureen Stapleton. "He was an award winning director of primarily documentary films for the National Film Board. Having met him personally and learning of his stature as a director, in addition to the prospect of working in tandem with Paul Stevens, whose work I was familiar with from the New York theatre scene, well, all these elements were all involved in my desire to participate in this unusual project."

An allegorical take on the dangers of illicit drug use, the film's thinly-veiled references to addiction – with the titular object forming an increasing hold over those who wear it – were not lost on Nevins.

"In my character's pleadings with Paul's character it was as if I were speaking to a person in the grip of drug or alcohol addiction, someone whose life was being destroyed by the power of that drug and who needed to free himself of its hold over him, or die."

Though 3-D had already peaked several years earlier with releases such as *House of Wax* (1953) and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), Taylor – who, in addition to founding the groundbreaking publication *Canadian Film Weekly* in 1941, had opened the Toronto International Film Studios in Kleinberg, Ontario in 1959, and would later introduce multi-screen cinema complexes to Canada – was on the lookout for an idea for another film, and he and Roffman found one when two men working in advertising, Sandy Haver and Frank Taubes, approached Roffman with the concept for a film combining both 3-D and standard 2-D footage.

Initially skeptical about the concept, Roffman consulted a friend, 3-D expert Raymond Spottiswoode (whose son, Roger, would direct 1980's *Terror Train*), and was informed of camera equipment that could be brought over from the UK to use.



Claudette Nevins as Pamela and Paul Stevens as Dr. Allan Barnes

Japanese movie poster



UK movie poster, alternate title



The Mask 3-D viewing glasses



According to issue #25 of *Filmfax* magazine (Feb /Mar 1991), Roffman contacted former colleagues Joe and Vicky Morhein to write the script for the 2-D portions. (Though they wrote none of the script, Haver and Taubes were still credited as screenwriters on the film.) For the phantasmegorical 3-D sequences, veteran Yugoslavian art director and designer Slavko Vorkapich was originally hired to come up with concepts, but when his ideas were deemed too outlandish and costly, he was let go from the project (though he, too, was still given credit), and Roffman was forced to come up with ideas for the surreal scenes himself. For these sequences, Nevins doesn't recall experiencing any problems herself, but says the same could not be said for those working behind-the-camera.

"The dream sequences and the 3-D aspects of the film were not an exceptional concern for the actors," says Nevins. "They were, of course, a major issue for the technical crew and the camera operators but secondary for the actors."

Produced on an estimated budget of $284,000, The Mask was shot in Toronto (with locations including the Royal Ontario Museum) and at Taylor's studio in Kleinberg. Adding to the strangeness of the visual effects was the experimental electronic score – touted in advertising as "Electro-Magic Sound" – by Louis Applebaum. Sold to Warner Bros. even before it was completed, the film, which was promoted by trailers featuring noted publicist Jim Moran as a famous "mask collector," made its debut in late October of 1961, earning both significant box office returns and mainly positive reviews.

Re-released in the early '70s under the more exploitative title *Eyes of Hell*, the film would find new audiences when it was screened at various US college campuses. In the early 1980s, it would be broadcast on television, and viewers were able to purchase the necessary red and blue-lensed 3-D glasses at their neighborhood convenience store. It was around this time that Roffman revisited the film when he produced and directed some newly shot wraparound material featuring magician Harry Blackstone, for a VHS release. A later release, featuring Elvira, would be marketed via Rhino Home Video, followed up with a couple of grey-market DVDs.

Nevins – who is aware of the film's reputation as a cult classic – recalls having "a wonderful experience" making *The Mask*. But one of her fondest recollections of working on the film actually comes from traveling to Toronto to shoot it.

"What was particularly meaningful for me about working on *The Mask* was that it brought me to Canada for the first time in my life. In fact, it was my first trip outside the United States! So, essentially, I was going to a foreign country. Now of course I know how much more we are alike than alien. But at that time, Toronto was an adventure for me – a vibrant and exciting city with the flavor of 'the foreign,' unknown and surprising."

FURTHER VIEWING

PLAYGIRL KILLER (1966)
STARRING WILLIAM KERWIN, JEAN CHRISTOPHER AND ANDREE CHAMPAGNE
DIRECTED BY ERICK SANTAMARIA

Bill (William Kerwin) is an artist with a bad habit of murdering his models. On the lam for killing a young woman (with a harpoon gun!) who didn't sit still when she posed for him, he finds himself at the mansion of Arlene (Jean Christopher), a young woman whose father is away for the summer. Arlene hires Bill as a handyman and tries to seduce him, but also falls victim to the artist's homicidal impulses. Bill decides to remain in the house to lure other young women there to model for him. Shot in Montreal, this deliciously sleazy trash-fest features singer Neil Sedaka (who also gives a performance) in a small role.

THE VULTURE (1967)
STARRING ROBERT HUTTON, AKIM TAMIROFF AND BRODERICK CRAWFORD
DIRECTED BY LAWRENCE HUNTINGTON

Cornwall, England is the setting for this Canada/UK co-production, which sees a village menaced by a monstrous part-man/part-bird creature. A scientist, Dr. Eric Lutens (Robert Hutton) and his wife, Trudy (Diane Clare), visiting from the US, stumble across a local legend about a revenge-seeking pirate who was condemned for sorcery and buried alive with his pet vulture. Could there be a connection between the legend and the recent attacks? Or perhaps the enigmatic Professor Hans Konigilch (Akim Tamiroff) knows more about the vulture-man than he's disclosing to Dr. Lutens ..

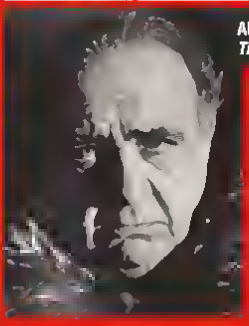
DR. FRANKENSTEIN ON CAMPUS A.K.A. FLICK (1970)
STARRING ROBIN WARD, KATHLEEN SAWYER AND SEAN SULLIVAN
DIRECTED BY GILBERT W. TAYLOR

Viktor Frankenstein (Robin Ward) has been kicked out of university in his native Ingolstadt. Traveling to Canada, he attends the University of Toronto, where he studies mind control under Professor Preston (Sean Sullivan). However, when Viktor is set up by student radicals who photograph him with drugs, the young scientist is again booted out of school. But Frankenstein gets his revenge by implanting a device into a fellow student, turning him into a ruthless killing machine.

THE REINCARNATE (1971)
STARRING JACK CRELEY, JAY REYNOLDS AND TRUDY YOUNG
DIRECTED BY DON HALBANE

Attorney Everet Julian (Jack Creley), who has experienced a lengthy existence through a series of reincarnations, learns that his present body is dying and must seek out a new one. He settles on a young sculptor, David (Jay Reynolds), and tries to persuade him of the benefits of such an arrangement, while at the same time also attempting to procure a young virgin, Ruthie (Trudy Young), to be used as the ceremonial sacrifice that will allow the reincarnation to take place.





Akim Tamiroff in *The Vulture*



CINÉPIX

INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER ANDRÉ LINK

IF YOU'RE READING THIS, IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME YOU'VE LOGGED MORE THAN A FEW HOURS WATCHING SUCH CANADIAN HORROR CLASSICS AS *Shivers*, *Rabid*, *My Bloody Valentine* and *Happy Birthday to Me*. All of these Canuck genre staples, along with some of the country's best-known filmmakers, can trace their roots back to a Montreal-based outfit known as Cinépix.

Cinépix was founded in 1962 by Montreal-born producer John Dunning (who died in 2011 at age 84). Dunning had spent most of his life around movies, working at his family's theatre in a variety of capacities. Shortly after he formed Cinépix, Dunning partnered with André Link, a Hungarian transplant with experience in booking and film sales.

"John was a distributor for cinema and I was working at one point in the capacity of a booker and salesman at International Film Distributors, which was [*The Mask* producer] Nat Taylor's company," Link remembers. "And then I went into television as a sales rep. When I knew that [Dunning] had a distribution outfit called Cinépix, we met and I became a partner."

Initially the company was involved only in distribution, importing French-language films and sexy European-lensed productions for Quebec audiences. But Dunning and Link eventually hit upon the idea that, instead of purchasing product, they should attempt to produce their own films, and Cinépix made its first feature – a black-and-white, French-language erotic film called *Valérie* – in 1969. The movie was a huge hit in Quebec, and the company followed it up with several other so-called "maple-syrup porn" flicks, including *L'initiation* (a.k.a. *Here and Now*) in 1970 and the English-language *Loving and Laughing* in 1971.

Link and Dunning would soon move into the horror genre with 1972's occult-themed *The Possession of Virginia* (a.k.a. *Le diable est parmi nous*) and the following year's *The Pyx*, which featured both French and English dialogue. The films performed well in Quebec but garnered little attention in English-speaking Canada and the United States.

Eager to break into those lucrative markets, Dunning and Link correctly surmised that an exploitation horror film would be an effective way to reach English-speaking audiences. Upon receiving a script titled *Orgy of the Blood Parasites* from a young filmmaker named David Cronenberg, the pair presented it to the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC, now Telefilm Canada) for government arts funding. The film – which would be released in Canada and the US as *Shivers* and *They Came from Within*, respectively – was produced by a young Ivan Reitman.

Shivers received an incredibly harsh preview by respected film critic Robert Fulford (writing under the pen name "Marshall Delaney"), which appeared in the September 1975 issue of *Saturday Night*. The piece not only bashed the film for its violence and nudity, but also criticized the CFDC and its executive director, Michael Spencer, for providing funding to the project. The article even led to talks in the Cana-



dian Parliament over the worth of the CFDC's program.

"He wrote that if the government financed *Shivers* then it might as well go into [financing] bordellos," recalls Link of Fulford's infamous article. "But I do believe that Mr. Fulford was dead wrong."

Many people apparently agreed with Link; *Shivers* was a box-office success, and the CFDC was able to recoup its investment. Cinépix then moved on to William Fruet's rape-revenge thriller *Death Weekend* (1976) and a series of flicks featuring a sadistic female Nazi officer named Ilsa (portrayed by Dyanne Thorne), beginning with 1975's *Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS*. In 1977, Cinépix released Cronenberg's second feature, *Rabid*, which starred Marilyn Chambers. Like *Shivers*, the film was a box-office success in spite of generating controversy – this time for its casting of former porn star Chambers. Other Cinépix releases include 1978's *Blackout*, the 1979 box-office hit *Meatballs* and the 1981 slasher classics *Happy Birthday to Me* and *My Bloody Valentine*.

Cinépix churned out close to 60 films before it was finally sold to Lions Gate Entertainment Corporation in 1997. Dunning and Link's contributions to Canada's film industry have been honoured with numerous awards over the years, including a 1993 Genie Award and their 2007 induction into the Canadian Film and Television Hall of Fame. Before his death, Dunning was presented with the 2011 Clyde Gilmour Award from the Toronto Film Critics Association, his memoir, *You're Not Dead Until You're Forgotten* (co-written by Bill Brownstein), was published in 2014.



Link says Dunning enjoyed mentoring fledgling filmmakers like Cronenberg, and Link himself finds satisfaction in the knowledge that so many of the artists and producers who worked with Cinépix are still making movies.

"John felt that working with emerging talent and giving them a chance was really something that he very much liked to do," he recalls. "It's amazing, all the people we dealt with and how well they achieved their [goals]."



DEATHDREAM (1972)

DURING THE LATE 1960S AND EARLY 70S, FAMILIES WERE BOMBARDED ON a nightly basis with television news reports of the war in Vietnam. In the midst of this came a film that, instead of glorifying the bloody conflict in Southeast Asia, chose to question the cost of America's involvement. Bob Clark's 1972 classic, *Deathdream*.

The film begins with a pair of soldiers who, amidst the blasting of machine guns and explosions lighting up the nighttime sky, are trying to steer clear of enemy fire when they are suddenly hit. Cut to the brightly lit dining room of the middle-class Brooks family. Charles (John Marley), his wife, Christine (Lynn Carlin) and their daughter Cathy (Anya Ormsby). Their dinner is interrupted by a knock at the door, and a soldier informs Charles that his son, Andy, has been killed in combat in Vietnam.



That night, a truck driver picks up a hitchhiker – a young soldier in uniform – and stops at a diner, remarking to the staff that his passenger hasn't said a single word. Later that night, Cathy hears a noise downstairs, and when the family goes to investigate, they are astonished to find a uniformed Andy (Richard Backus) standing there. Ecstatic at his return, they are nevertheless perplexed by the announcement that he was dead – to which Andy replies, "I was."

The next day, the body of the trucker is discovered with his throat slashed. Meanwhile, Andy – who does little but sit in the backyard or in his bedroom rocking chair – will not eat with his family, and Charles complains that his son has changed. Christine defends Andy's aloof behaviour, but an argument erupts – Christine blames her husband for pressuring Andy to enlist in the military – and Charles begins drinking heavily after his son kills the family dog. When the local physician drops by the house to see Andy, he learns that the young man had returned the same night the truck driver was killed, and the doctor suspects that he may be responsible.

Deathdream was the second horror offering from Clark, who would go on to direct 1974's *Black Christmas* before turning his attention to comedies. (His first horror film was the darkly comedic zombie flick *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things*.) Boasting a highly intelligent script by Alan Ormsby, the film also features a creepy score from Carl Zittrer and impressive makeup effects by Ormsby and a young Tom Savini. In managing to so effectively depict the breakdown of the family, *Deathdream* is one of the most sombre examples of Canadian genre cinema.





THE PYX (1973)

INTERVIEW WITH KAREN BLACK

ONE OF A HANDFUL OF BLACK MAGIC CULT-THEMED FILMS TO EMERGE FROM Canada, the underrated 1973 thriller *The Pyx* may, at first glance, appear to be little more than a riff on *Rosemary's Baby* (1968). The film was, however, already prefaced by a 1959 novel of the same name by Canadian author John Buell.

Produced by Julian Roffman (*The Mask*), the film begins with the apparent suicide of a woman (Karen Black *Burnt Offerings*, *Trilogy of Terror*) whose white gown-clad body is seen spiraling downward from the penthouse balcony of a Montreal high-rise. Detective Sergeant Jim Henderson (Christopher Plummer: *Murder by Decree*) and his partner, Pierre Paquette (Donald Pilon: *The Uncanny*), examine the corpse and find she is wearing an inverted crucifix and holding a pyx – a small metal container that Catholic priests use to bring the consecrated host to the sick or infirm. Learning that she was a heroin-addled, high-class prostitute named Elizabeth Lucy, the detectives visit the woman's madam, Meg Latimer (Yvette Brind'amour), who is reluctant to answer questions about Elizabeth or her last client.



Eventually, Henderson discovers that the woman's final customer was a wealthy, powerful man named Keerson (Jean-Louis Roux), and that her death was not a suicide, but the result of a vile satanic ritual. The film's narrative alternates between the police investigation and flashbacks to the last day of Elizabeth's life.

"It was a difficult part because it was [that of] an addict," recalled Black, who passed away in August 2013. "I do like the movie, and I like myself in it because I'm [portraying] a sort of negative, protesting person. Usually, I'm playing agreeable people. And I liked the research into that kind of character. It was interesting work for me."

For some parts of the film, including a bizarre black mass sequence and an outdoor scene, Black – who was clad in little more than a sheer white dress – remembers receiving some unusual looks from the cast and crew.

"What I was worried about while making the movie was that I was virtually naked under that little diaphanous costume," she admits. "And I kept forgetting that, because I kept doing scenes running around like that, and people kept giving me strange looks. And then I'd remember that I was sort of naked under that [gown]. I [also] had to lie outside, if you remember that scene. So, that was very cold."

Filmed on a budget of $1 million, *The Pyx* was released in North American theatres in the fall of 1973 to less-than-expected box-office returns. Black felt that the film's title (which was changed to *The Hooker Cult Murders* for muddy, grey-market DVD releases) didn't do it any favours.

"I think that [*The Pyx*] really was a very difficult title, because no one seems to exactly know what that means," she says, "so it doesn't bring people into the movie."

Combining elements of a police procedural along with gritty drama and occult themes, *The Pyx* defies easy classification. But Black – who also wrote and performed three rather sombre folk songs for the film – was reluctant to call it a horror movie.

"Well, it's a detective story and, to me, it seems more like a murder mystery, that's all," she said. "It's one of my favourite genres; I like to read them. But it was a very good time, a good shoot. Christopher [Plummer] is just one of the best actors that was ever born. I really liked [director] Harvey Hart and I thought we got along very well."

DERANGED (1974)

INSPIRED BY THE GRISLY DEEDS OF PLAINFIELD, WISCONSIN MURDERER AND GRAVEROBBER ED GEIN, 1974's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remains one of modern horror's most iconic films. Also released earlier that year was a much more accurate take on the crimes: *Deranged (made in '73)*, an incredibly chilling, overlooked cult classic that has never received the recognition it deserves.

The project got off the ground when Tom Karr, a concert promoter for the likes of Led Zeppelin and Rod Stewart, became acquainted with writer/actor/makeup artist Alan Ormsby (*Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, *Dead of Night*) and expressed a desire to produce a film about the murderous bodysnatcher. Collaborating with actor Jeff Gillen (who had also appeared in both *Children* and *Dead*), Ormsby wrote the script and co-directed the film with Gillen. *Black Christmas* director Bob Clark was a producer on the film but had his name removed due to objections over the content of the movie.



Changing the names of those involved and occasionally utilizing an onscreen "narrator" portrayed by Leslie Carlson (*Videodrome*), the film has simple, mild-mannered Ezra Cobb (Roberts Blossom: *Christine*) taking care of his gravely ill mother (Cosette Lee: TV's *Strange Paradise*), a domineering, religiously fanatical woman who has instilled in her son a mistrust of other women. After she dies, Cobb falls into a deep depression and, in his longing to be reunited with her, decides to dig up her corpse and bring it home. Repairing the decaying body, he also figures Momma would like some extra company, so he checks the obituaries and drives to the cemetery to remove freshly buried bodies and parts to take home.

When a visit with his mother's former friend, Maureen Selby (Marian Waldman: *Black Christmas*) ends in murder, Cobb decides to seek out another woman and sets his sights on an attractive waitress named Mary (Micki Moore) at a local bar where, amusingly, Canuck country icon Stompin' Tom Connors can be heard in the background. Offering Mary a lift home one night, Cobb stops at his farmhouse and the waitress makes the mistake of going inside, where she finds Cobb dressed in a shawl and sporting long white hair and a mask and bra made from human skin. She tries to run away but is captured and later finds herself seated at a dining table with Cobb, Momma and several "friends."

While the film is quite faithful in depicting some of Gein's gruesome acts, Ormsby's script – which features instances of delicious dark humour – takes several liberties with events, such as Cobb digging up his mother and bringing the corpse home. (In reality, Gein never disinterred his mother.)

Deranged features still-shocking makeup effects courtesy of Ormsby and an up-and-coming Tom Savini, and a truly eerie score by CanCon favourite Carl Zittrer. One of the main strengths of the film is the fantastic performance by Blossom, whose Cobb – unlike the hulking, grotesque Leatherface of *Texas Chainsaw* – appears so disarmingly meek most of the time, that you never really know when he'll suddenly pull out a rifle or a leg bone and strike you down in cold blood.



FURTHER VIEWING

THE POSSESSION OF VIRGINIA A.K.A. LE DIABLE EST PARMI NOUS (1972)
STARRING DANIEL PILON, LOUISE MARLEAU AND DANIELLE OUIMET
DIRECTED BY JEAN BEAUDIN

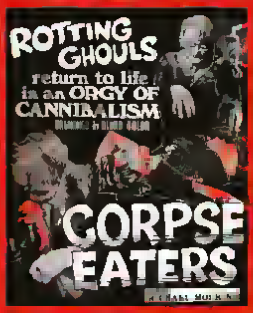
Journalist Paul Dwyer (Daniel Pilon) gets more than he bargained for when he investigates the suicide of a friend: his cat is poisoned, his home is ransacked and Virginia (Danielle Ouimet), a young woman who worked in his dead friend's antiques shop, is found hanging from a rope in a church – all while a strange old woman seems to lurk nearby. Most copies of this hard-to-find, Montreal-shot flick are sourced from a heavily edited, English-dubbed version that, in addition to removing scenes of sex and gore, also leaves the film with numerous plot holes.

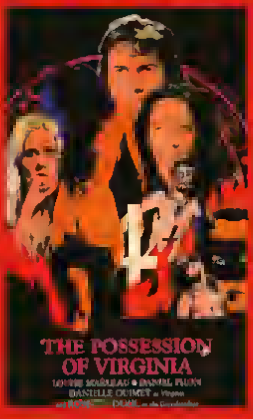
A NAME FOR EVIL (1973)
STARRING ROBERT CULP, SAMANTHA EGGAR AND SHEILA SULLIVAN
DIRECTED BY BERNARD GIRARD

Architect John Blake (Robert Culp) leaves his family business behind and moves with his wife, Joanna (Samantha Eggar) to his great-grandfather's country house. He plans to restore the manor to its former glory, however, once the renovation is underway, he begins to hear voices and see apparitions. John finds comfort – and more – from all this in the free-spirited locals, who dance nude in the town bar and engage in bizarre orgies in the woods. Based on a novel by Andrew Lytle, *A Name for Evil* began filming in Vancouver in 1970. Due to rising production costs, it was shelved until Penthouse picked it up and released it three years later – after apparently adding a few nude scenes, including full-frontal ones of Culp.

THE CORPSE EATERS (1974)
STARRING MICHAEL HOPKINS, EDMOND LEBRETON AND HELINA CARSON
DIRECTED BY DONALD R. PASSMORE AND KLAUS VETTER

Canada's first zombie flick, the ultra low-budget *The Corpse Eaters* (which was funded by a Sudbury, Ontario drive-in owner named Lawrence Zazelenchuk, and only played at his drive-in) tells of two couples who grab some beer and go out for a boat ride, followed by some topless frolicking and a swim in the lake. Later that evening, one of the guys suggests that, since it's Friday the 13th, they should all spend the night in a graveyard. The four drive to a nearby cemetery, where they find the door to a crypt open and go inside. They draw a pentagram on a sarcophagus, invert a cross hanging on one of the walls and recite an incantation, which prompts the dead to rise out of the ground and descend on the hosers in a gory fashion.



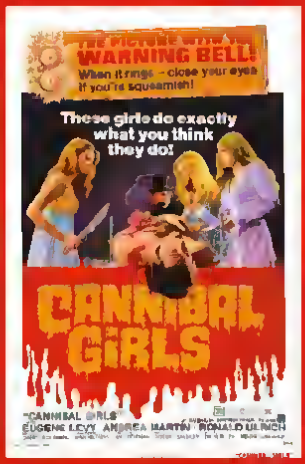


(1973)

CANNIBAL GIRLS

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR IVAN REITMAN
(WITH FILES FROM MICHAEL DOYLE)

PROLIFIC PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR IVAN REITMAN IS A HOUSEHOLD NAME for generations of movie fans, thanks to blockbuster comedies such as *Animal House*, *Ghostbusters* and *Kindergarten Cop*. But before he worked with John Landis, Bill Murray and Arnold Schwarzenegger, Reitman made his living as a producer on such low-budget Canuck genre classics as David Cronenberg's *Shivers* and *Rabid*, and William Fruet's *Death Weekend*. More than a decade before *Ghostbusters* became one of the highest grossing films of 1984, Reitman directed a Canadian comedy-horror flick titled *Cannibal Girls*.



Notable for being one of his first directorial efforts (previously, he had helmed a 1969 short titled *Orientation* and the 1971 comedy *Foxy Lady*) and the early teaming of future *SCTV* cast members Eugene Levy and Andrea Martin, *Cannibal Girls* also has the distinction of being shot without an actual script; the film's dialogue was developed by both the cast and filmmakers, who worked on it at Reitman's home while a secretary took notes.

"I'm a little embarrassed by the fact that *Cannibal Girls* didn't have a script, but I'm also proud that we got a chance to do it – and, frankly, that we had the balls to do it!" admits Reitman. "We only had a thirteen-page outline when we started shooting, but that outline did contain all the important scenes. I think there are parts of the film that are funny – in the way my later films have gotten to be funny – and it was an interesting experience for me as a director in that it sort of featured the very early use of improvisation in a comedy film."

The film sees a couple, Clifford (Levy) and Gloria (Martin), drive out to the picturesque, snow-covered town of Farnhamville for the weekend. Despite some car trouble, the pair finally pulls into town and when Cliff inquires about accommodations, is directed to a motel run by a nice old lady named Mrs. Wainwright (May Jarvis). She invites the couple inside and tells them it's nice to have them stay because due to "the legend about the three girls," few visitors come to the area anymore.

When asked about the legend, Mrs. Wainwright relates a story – via flashback – of three beautiful young women who lure men to their farmhouse and murder them via scissors, an axe or by simply eating them alive. The bodies are then placed in a freezer by their misshapen, Igor-like servant, to be cut up and cooked for dinner. She tells Cliff and Gloria that the farmhouse has since been turned into a restaurant, and the couple expresses an interest in eating there. After settling into their room, Cliff goes out to have the car checked over



Spanish lobby card

at the nearby service station while Gloria stays behind.

Later, Mrs. Wainwright directs them to the "restaurant," where they dine with the tuxedo and top hat-sporting proprietor, the Reverend Alex St. John (Ronald Ulrich). Invited to stay the night, the couple is later awakened in their room by the Charles Manson-like Reverend and his three beautiful young companions. The Reverend tries to mesmerize Gloria into killing Cliff, but she breaks free of his influence and runs out into the cold winter night, where she's rescued by the town doctor. The next day, a sleeping Gloria is awakened by Cliff, they are in their hotel room and she has seemingly dreamed the events of the previous night. She wants to leave the strange town but Cliff says they can't because their car is in the repair shop, and there's no bus service until the next day. So, they must stay another night in Farnhamville ...

According to a piece by Joe Medjuck in a 1973 issue of *Take One* magazine, Reitman's initial plan only allowed a nine-day shooting schedule for the unabashedly Canadian film. (In addition to the blustery cold and snowy environment, there are some Hoser accents, references to Toronto and the Buttonville Airport and even – gasp! – a Canadian flag perched on the side of Mrs. Wainwright's motel.) However, during the editing process, Reitman and co-producer/editor Daniel Goldberg decided that changes needed to be made to the film's structure. Re-shoots were conducted, upping the final number of shooting days to 24 and forcing the pair to borrow money from family and friends and rack up bills for various equipment, lab and editing services around Toronto. A frenzied job of getting *Cannibal Girls* completed and a print delivered to France in time for the 1972 Cannes Film Festival led to a distribution deal with American International Pictures, who released it in the US in the spring of '73 with the tagline, "These girls do exactly what you think they do!"

The company edited out a few snippets of gore to obtain an R rating, and also hit upon the idea of adding the William Castle-inspired gimmick of a warning bell that would inform patrons when scenes of "an especially erotic or gruesome nature" were about to unfold. Reitman, who was not against trying to attract additional interest in a film (after all, he was instrumental in getting Ivory Snow model-turned-porn starlet Marilyn Chambers for the lead role in *Rabid*), was not impressed with AIP's gimmick, however.

"When we sold the movie to AIP, they thought the warning bell was a cute gimmick to put in it," he says. "I actually tried to fight them to take it out. I mean, *Cannibal Girls* is a little bit scary, but by warning people that a scary moment was coming up, they sort of lost the element of surprise. So for that reason alone, I thought the warning bell was kind of dumb."

More than 40 years after the film's release, Reitman admits that his little cult classic is more than a bit rough around the edges, but remains proud of the film.

"I am a little shocked at how raw *Cannibal Girls* is when I look at it now, but I think it does have an interesting energy," he says. "It isn't quite funny enough and it isn't quite scary enough, but I am proud of the movie. I'm proud that I got the opportunity to do it."



CHAPTER 2



THE TAX SHELTER YEARS (1974 - 1988)

THE PERIOD THAT STRETCHED FROM THE MID-1970S TO THE LATE 1980S IS OFTEN REFERRED TO — [illegible] paraging[illegible] — as the [illegible] years, a time when government tax incentives helped kick-start Canada's feature film industry.

Although tax shelters – referred to as the Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) – had already been in place for a number of years, they were raised in 1974 to provide a 100 percent tax write-off for any individual investing in a Canadian production. This led many of the country's high-income earners – doctors, lawyers and other professionals – to put money into locally lensed films in order to avoid paying taxes on that amount.

As unsavory as it might sound, the tax breaks allowed the country to establish a viable film industry and helped launch the careers of a number of Canadian filmmakers, including David Cronenberg and *Ghostbusters* director Ivan Reitman. Still, critics pointed out that the system was ripe for abuse, substantial portions of a movie's budget could be devoted to lawyers, brokers and producer fees, leaving less money for actually making the film. A points system, although it mandated a largely Canadian cast and crew, allowed for imported American actors in leading roles and, in some cases, projects were being produced for the sole purpose of a tax dodge, with no intent on the part of investors to actually release the end product.

Operating concurrently with the CCA was the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC, now known as Telefilm), a government body formed in 1967 to help foster Canada's film industry by providing funds to producers. CFDC involvement led to the production of such esteemed Canuck classics as *Goin' Down the Road* (1970) and *The Rowdyman* (1972), as well as genre films such as 1974's *Black Christmas* and David Cronenberg's controversial 1975 debut feature, *Shivers* (a.k.a. *They Came from Within*).

It was inevitable that the CFDC would come under attack for providing government arts funding to films that some considered pure exploitation. *Shivers* was a favourite target, with well-known reviewer Robert Fulford writing in a 1975 magazine article that Cronenberg's shocker was "... the most repulsive film I have ever seen."

Still, the movie earned more than $5 million, allowing the CFDC to recoup its costs and further paving the way for Canada's tax-shelter genre boom. Besides Cronenberg's string of body-horror films, the era produced such Canuck horror favourites as *Death Weekend* (1976), *Rituals* (1977), *The Changeling* (1980), plus a slew of early '80s slasher flicks that included *Prom Night* (1980), *My Bloody Valentine* (1981) and *Curtains* (1983).

The CCA would be repealed in 1981, only to be reintroduced the following year at the much lower rate of 50 percent. Still, it would lead to such cult classics as *The Gate* (1987) and *Pin: A Plastic Nightmare* (1988) before it was further reduced to the pre-1974 rate of 30% in the late 1980s.

Japanese movie poster





(1974)

BLACK CHRISTMAS

INTERVIEW WITH STARS AAT BINDLE AND LYNNE GRIFFIN, PRODUCTION DESIGNER KAREN BROMLEY AND COMPOSER CARL ZITTRER

ADJECTIVES LIKE "SCARY" AND "FRIGHTENING" SEEM TO BE THROWN around a little too flippantly when describing a lot of horror movies nowadays. But for 40 years, one film has been giving audiences chills and continues to make them afraid to go up to their attics: Bob Clark's seminal 1974 classic *Black Christmas*. One of the most celebrated horror efforts to come out of Canada, the film not only manages to give a creepy slant to what should be one of the most joyous of holidays, it helped lay the foundation for what would eventually become the slasher film.

In the town of Bedford, a group of sorority sisters celebrate the start of their Christmas break by holding a party. Frequently inebriated Barb (Margot Kidder, *Sisters*, *Superman: The Movie*) has just made holiday plans with Jess (Olivia Hussey, *Romeo and Juliet*) and Phyl (Andrea Martin, *Cannibal Girls*, TV's *SCTV*) when they receive an obscene phone call, comprised of screams, guttural growls, demented laughter, profanity and animal noises. It upsets many of the young women, including Clare (Lynne Griffin, *Curtains*, *Strange Brew*).

After going upstairs to pack for her visit home, she's attacked by an intruder and suffocated with a dry-cleaning bag. Carrying the young woman's body up to his hiding place in the attic, the assailant sits her corpse in a rocking chair by the window. (Art director Karen Bromley, who also worked on *Rituals*, added to the movie's creepy atmosphere.) After Clare fails to meet her father the following day, he goes to his daughter's sorority house to look for her. Meanwhile, Jess visits her boyfriend, Peter (Keir Dullea, *2001: A Space Odyssey*) to inform him she's pregnant with his child but intends to get an abortion – which sits none-too-well with him.

After Clare's disappearance is reported to the police, it's discovered that another girl in the town has gone missing, so a search for both of them is organized by Lt. Fuller (John Saxon). Over the course of that evening, Jess receives several more ominous phone calls and she, Phyl, Barb and their alcoholic housemother Mrs. Mac (Marian Waldman, *Deranged*) find themselves targeted by the mysterious killer, who calls himself "Billy."

Before *Black Christmas*, the New Orleans-born Clark had directed the darkly humourous zombie flick *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* (1972) and was working on another film, *Deathdream*, a.k.a. *Dead of Night* (also 1972), when he decided to relocate to Canada. Obtaining a script titled *Stop Me!* by screenwriter Roy Moore (a previous version of it was called *The Babysitter* and told of a girl menaced by a killer who made phone calls to her from within the house), Clark rewrote portions of the screenplay – apparently toning down some of the more violent elements. In fact, with the exception of Clare's death and one other murder (a victim is killed with a glass unicorn figurine, intercut with shots of a children's choir singing a carol on the front porch of the house), most of the violence in *Black Christmas* occurs off-screen.

Instead, the film's eerie atmosphere is achieved through shots of darkened, shadow-filled hallways, Carl Zittrer's unusual, discordant score (largely created by hanging forks and other utensils from the tuning pegs of an upright piano), sound effects such as the ticking of a clock, and of course, Billy's psychotic, rage-filled phone calls (some of which were supplied by *Death Ship*'s Nick Mancuso). The film's subjective camera

US insert poster



work – showing the action from the killer's point of view – would seemingly influence later slasher films such as John Carpenter's 1978 hit, *Halloween*

Despite a pervasive sense of dread, the film also has quite a bit of humour, mostly supplied by Barb – whose speech about "a species of turtle that can screw for three days" remains a highlight in the film – and Mrs. Mac, who has hidden bottles of alcohol throughout the sorority house. It's worth noting that Hollywood legend Bette Davis was initially offered the housemother role before Waldman took it on. Casting changes also extended to the role of Lt. Fuller, which had been previously filled by Academy Award-winner Edmond O'Brien. Due to O'Brien's failing health (he was suffering from Alzheimer's), he was ultimately replaced by genre favorite John Saxon.

Filmed in Toronto in early 1974 on an estimated budget of $680,000, *Black Christmas* was released in Canada in the fall of '74 by Ambassador Film Distributors and went on to become a financial success. Noticing the film was a hit north of the border, Warner Bros. picked up the movie for distribution in the US. However, fearful that audiences would think it was a blexploitation flick, the company changed the film's title to *Silent Night, Evil Night*, and it languished at the box office. Warner Bros. would re-release the film the following year under its original title, but *Black Christmas* would never find box office success in the US.

Clark later steered away from the horror genre – although his 1979 Sherlock Holmes-themed release, *Murder By Decree*, does contain some horror elements – and instead went on to direct such films as *Porky's* (1982) and a holiday classic of another kind, *A Christmas Story* (1983). His final credit before his tragic death at age 67 in an April 2006 car accident was as executive producer of the widely panned 2006 remake of *Black Christmas*.

We asked the cast and crew of the film about their experiences making the movie.

***Can you tell me how you were cast in* Black Christmas?**

Lynne Griffin: I think it was a regular audition with a lot of other girls. I read specifically for [the role of] Clare. I don't remember there being a sort of broad net of "Let's just bring in a bunch of actresses and let [them] read for a lot of different roles."

Art Hindle: It was very simply through the audition process. I got called in and met Bob Clark and read for him, as you usually do. I read a couple of scenes out of the movie and Bob cast me. Actually, the scenes I read were those of the character of Peter, who is played by Keir Dullea. And I had a chance to work with Olivia Hussey for a couple of weeks, rehearsing the scenes as Peter, because Keir Duella was late or couldn't come to the early part of the shoot.

Why didn't you actually play the role of Peter?

AH: At that point, Bob had actually cast Keir as Peter. The money people wanted a big name, and Keir had one from doing *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But, Bob said to me that, had I read for the role before Keir Dullea did, he probably would have cast me as Peter. And after that, I worked with him on quite a few films, and he just auto-



US Lobby card

matically cast in me in his movies We did *Porky's*, and I did a cameo for *Porky's II*. We became friends and used to go out golfing together.

What was it like working with him?

Carl Zittrer: Well, I had known Bob since high school, and worked on some movies earlier than *Black Christmas* and we kind of grew up together in the business.

Keren Bromley: He was very collaborative. He was very open to people's suggestions and contributions. He was very clear about what he was looking for. He wasn't one of those guys who don't know what they want until they see it. He could tell you exactly what kind of effect he wanted from something, so therefore you knew how to do things that would do that for him. The shoot went well because Bob knew what he was doing and we had a good crew, we had a good team of professionals.

AH: I understood that when I was rehearsing with Olivia, a sound guy or the cinematographer would come in and talk with Bob about something, and [Bob] would in fact, at times, seem to know more about their craft than they did. I remember one instance when the sound guy wanted to do something about the children's choir at the door and said, "Well, I don't think i can do that." And Bob just kind of walked him through the scene and told him how he could do it.

Any anecdotes about working on the film?

LG: When we were shooting the scene where we're on the phone listening to Billy's phone call, of course we had no idea what was being said because we're all just pretending to be listening to something. We all asked Bob Clark, "Well, how should we react?" And he said, 'Well, it's a bit blue." And for me, at that age, I was playing the virgin and I thought, "Well, maybe he says a bad word or something." But when I actually saw the film, I went, "Wow!" And this was on the verge of what Linda Blair was saying in *The Exorcist*. And I didn't know that's what it was going to be. So, that was a lovely surprise to me, if you can call it lovely. [Laughs] It was quite a wonderful set.

AH: [For the hockey practice scene], Bob originally had me going up and down being one of the forward guys, and I said to Bob, "It would be a lot more fun if you made me a goaltender." So we were doing a shooting drill and Olivia was trying to get my attention while they were shooting at me. And Bob asked them not to shoot at my head – and I was wearing that colorful mask – and of course, that's exactly what they were doing, shooting at my face.

KB: You know, it was an exciting production. It moved well. We used to have a lot of neighborhood kids hanging around while we filming. The coldest night of my life is when we shot that scene in the park.



"I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE ELSE HAS EVER BEEN KILLED WITH A DRY-CLEANING BAG."

Yes, that's what John Saxon has said...

KB: Ahh! It was like minus 30-something [degrees Celsius] and the wind was coming up from off the lake. And there was nothing between us and the lake, and it was so cold.

The house in* Black Christmas *is almost like a character unto itself. Why did you select that particular house? What was it about the house that made you want to use it?

KB: It took a long time to find that house. We wanted one with a certain character. We wanted one that was kind of foreboding, and that one certainly was. It needed to be a big house; you needed windows in the right places to get the shots down in. It needed to have some kind of access to an attic or a third floor.

Was there anyone living there at the time?

KB: There was. It was a family of Ukrainian plumbers. We went in and we painted or wallpapered up just about every room we shot in. One of the other reasons why we selected that house was because of the way the staircase comes down. Because there's that whole opportunity for that shot that is in the film where Olivia Hussey is on the phone at the bottom of the stairs and the guy is coming from behind her. So, for the house, you start with character – a foreboding, brooding, large kind of house, with windows that give us a bit of a sense of what's inside. And you look for the geography inside as well, in order to get a sense of what you need. We needed something with a lot of rooms.

Is the attic seen in the film the one in the actual house?

KB: Yes. But there was a stairway that went up to it. And we didn't want the stairway, we wanted a ladder with a trap door. My memory of it is that we dropped the ceiling and created the trap door. I know we put the ladder up, because that didn't exist. And I think we dropped the ceiling about a foot so we could just start to open up the take trap door. And we built the trellis that went up the side of the house.



Despite all the Christmas wreaths and bright lights, there's still a creepiness to the house.

KB: It's the dark wood, the panelling, the lighting, the shadows. It's things like the lights on the Christmas tree and the lights outside that, when you see them, are almost always out of focus. So, they're not that bright, cheery kind of lights that you get. And with the exteriors, back then when we shot it – unlike now – there

was a lot of empty space around the house, a lot of darkness.

The score is very unusual. Carl, did you encounter any problems composing it?

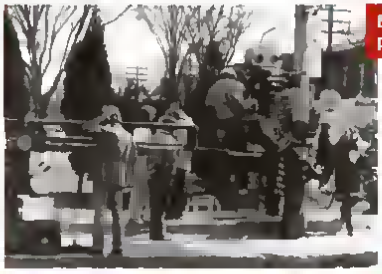
CZ: Well, I would say that the entire thing was a problem. And the problem was how to integrate the sound effects with the music – how to make music into the sound effects. I had first been impressed by that technique from a movie with music that was composed by Tōru Takemitsu. And that movie was *Kwaidan*. That's where Tōru used sound effects as music and music as sound effects. There was no division or little division, and that inspired me. And I wanted to try and at least honour that technique in *Black Christmas*. And when I say honour, I'm not going to imply that I did 1/15th as well as Tōru Takemitsu did, but he showed me the way.

"IT WAS THE CANADIAN FILM INDUSTRY THAT ACTUALLY GAVE US MORE FREEDOM TO PLAY WITH TECHNIQUES THAN WE WOULD HAVE HAD IN THE UNITED STATES."

What is it about* Black Christmas *that sets it apart from other slasher or horror films?

CZ: It was the Canadian film industry that actually gave us more freedom to play with techniques than we would have had in the United States. Because, one, the Canadian film industry was not as union-bound. And two, because it was younger, it didn't hold us up, with people saying "Well, you have to do it that way, because that's the way we always did it." So it was much freer, and we were able to do experimental things, [and] some things in *Black Christmas* were clearly experimental. And when we went into the mix with *Black Christmas*, we asked the mixer to try this and try that and "Let's hear it through reverb," and decide what we were going to do. I don't think we would have been able to get away with that in California, because it would have cost too much.

LG: *Black Christmas* has some really beautiful cinematography that sort of makes it a bit classier. Especially the way the genre has gone with "The more blood and more violence, the better." I liked [the film] because there were some unusual deaths – especially mine. I don't know if anyone else has ever been killed with a dry-cleaning bag. They use it on all the posters. But it was unusual for that time, because no one had really done that sort of antagonist POV camera [work]. And there's very little blood. You see, that to me is scary – the psychological stuff.



Behind-the-scenes production photo



John Rutter and John Saxon (as Lt. Ken Fuller)

Japanese movie program



DAVID CRONENBERG

THOUGH IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 25 YEARS SINCE HE'S DIRECTED A HORROR FILM David Cronenberg continues to be the most recognizable name in Canadian genre cinema. A true auteur, the controversial writer, director, producer and occasional actor has left a rich, gore-soaked cinematic legacy that includes *Shivers*, a.k.a. *They Came from Within* (1975), *Rabid* (1977), *The Brood* (1979), *Scanners* (1981), *Videodrome* (1983), *The Dead Zone* (1983), *The Fly* (1986) and *Dead Ringers* (1988).

Born in Toronto on March 15, 1943, Cronenberg attended the University of Toronto, where he became interested in filmmaking after a viewing of the 1965 movie *Winter Kept Us Warm*, which was shot at the university and helmed by fellow student David Secter. After learning the mechanics of filmmaking, he crafted two 16mm shorts, *Transfer* and *From the Drain*, in 1966 and 1967, respectively, and went on to make the 35mm experimental art-house films *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970). Both features attracted interest at screenings and film festivals, but they were not the sort of films that would earn him a living.



While contemplating his career as a filmmaker, Cronenberg – who has credited writers William S. Burroughs and Vladimir Nabokov as influences – decided to move to France, where he worked on a novel (which was ultimately abandoned) and filmed a number of brief television documentary programs for Canada's national broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

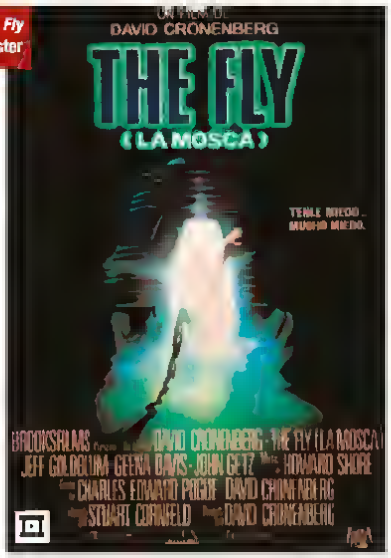
Making his way back to Toronto, he began work on the script for what would be the first of his infamous "body horror" films: *Shivers*. He brought his screenplay – at the time called *Orgy of the Blood Parasites* – to a small Montreal-based company called Cinépix. Headed by producers John Dunning and André Link, Cinépix specialized in softcore films, popularly known as "maple-syrup porn." (Cronenberg had even previously approached the company about the possibility of directing one of its skin flicks.) Though it wasn't typical Cinepix product, Dunning felt the concept – a genetically engineered parasite infects the residents of a high-rise, forcing them to commit acts of sexual violence – would allow the company to break into the coveted English Canadian and US markets and decided to take it on.

However, after submitting the script to the government arts funding body, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC, later known as Telefilm Canada) for backing, Cinépix would have to wait almost three years until the agency finally approved the project.

Shivers
Belgian poster



The Fly
Spanish poster



tor financial support. Before the CFDC's decision, a dispirited Cronenberg had turned to shopping his screenplay around to American producers, including Roger Corman's company, New World Pictures, according to Chris Rodley's indispensable book of interviews with the filmmaker, *Cronenberg on Cronenberg* (Faber and Faber Limited, 1992). With the film's funds now in place – $76,500 of the project's estimated $179,000 budget was provided by the CFDC, according to Caelum Vatnsdal's groundbreaking book on Canuck horror, *They Came from Within* (Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2004) – the project finally went into production in September 1974.

Just before its release in October 1975, however, both the movie (briefly known as *The Parasite Murders* before finally being given the titles *Shivers* and *They Came from Within* for its Canadian and US releases) and the CFDC were to come under attack when the film was given a scathing review in the September 1975 issue of *Saturday Night* magazine. Cronenberg had invited prominent film reviewer Robert Fulford (who had previously given *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future* favourable notices) to a screening of the movie, thinking the critic would appreciate it as well. But Fulford was repulsed by the film and penned a highly inflammatory piece titled "You should know how bad this film is. After all, you paid for it," in which he complained about the movie's baser elements. The article went so far as to suggest that "If using public money to produce films like *The Parasite Murders* is the only way that English Canada can have a film industry, then perhaps English Canada should not have a film industry."

Despite the film's poor reception from Canadian critics, *Shivers* was a box-office hit both in Canada and abroad, earning more than $5 million in revenue worldwide. In spite of its success, the fallout over its funding put Dunning and Link in a difficult situation with the CFDC when trying to secure money for Cronenberg's next film, *Rabid*. The agency ultimately found a way to discretely finance the film, and with a budget of $530,000 ($200,000 of that from the CFDC), filming on *Rabid* got underway in November 1976.

For the main role of Rose – who, after undergoing experimental plastic surgery, develops a bloodsucking, stinger-like organ that infects those she feeds from with a virus that transforms them into violent, rampaging beings – Cronenberg was interested in hiring a then-unknown Sissy Spacek, whom he had seen in 1973's *Badlands*. But the director was overruled by Dunning and producer Ivan Reitman, who believed that Marilyn Chambers, a former model for Ivory Snow detergent-turned popular porn actress, would increase the film's chances of being sold at Cannes.

The casting of Chambers did generate publicity, some of which would affect Cronenberg personally when his landlady at the time read a newspaper article on Chambers and had the filmmaker evicted from his flat. When the movie was released in 1977, however, it would garner even better box-office grosses than *Shivers*, earning more than $7 million. Unlike its predecessor, the critical reception to *Rabid* was significantly less caustic.

Cronenberg took a short hiatus from horror with the



Samantha Eggar as Nola Carreth

release of his racing car-themed *Fast Company*, but would return to frighten audiences with *The Brood* (1979), a tale of an emotionally unstable woman (Samantha Eggar) who gives birth to murderous mutant children. Produced on an estimated $1.4 million budget, *The Brood* was the filmmaker's first horror movie to be made without the participation of Dunning or Link. It was instead produced by Claude Heroux and the executive producing duo of Pierre David and Victor Solnicki. Several years after Cronenberg first considered having his work produced by Roger Corman, he would finally have a film distributed by the exploitation king, whose New World Pictures gave *The Brood* a significantly wider release than his previous two movies.

Cronenberg teamed up with Solnicki, David and Héroux again for *Scanners* (1981), about mutated humans who can telepathically destroy those around them. A problem-plagued project, *Scanners* had to be rushed into production in late 1980 in order to be eligible for tax shelter dollars. According to Rodley's book, that gave Cronenberg only a couple weeks for pre-production, and forced him to start filming with an incomplete script. But when the film exploded onto screens – courtesy of distributor Avco Embassy – in January 1981, it would take the number one spot on *Variety* magazine's box-office chart and become Cronenberg's most successful movie up to that point, reaping more than $14 million in revenue, and becoming popular enough to earn a novelization.

The filmmaker's last project to utilize tax shelter funding was *Videodrome*, again produced with the involvement of Héroux, David and Solnicki. One of his most iconic, celebrated offerings, the film has the owner of a small TV station (James Woods) searching for provocative new programming when he stumbles across a show depicting scenes of torture and murder that, when viewed, ultimately lead to hallucination-inducing brain tumours. Released in February 1983, Cronenberg's scathing critique of mass media consumption failed to attract an audience, and the film was an unmitigated flop.

Before *Videodrome* hit theatres, Cronenberg was already working on his next project: an adaptation of the 1979 Stephen King novel *The Dead Zone*. Featuring Christopher Walken as a man who awakens from a five-year coma to discover he has gained psychic abilities, the film was a both a critical and financial success.

Three years later, the director tackled a special effects-filled update of the classic 1958 Vincent Price sci-fi horror film *The Fly* (based upon a short story by author George Langelaan that was first published in a 1957 issue of *Playboy*). Starring Jeff Goldblum as a scientist who metamorphoses into an insect-like creature after an experimental mishap merges his molecules with those of a housefly, the film was – despite the gory, gooey effects – a transition into more mainstream territory. A box-office hit that earned more than $60 million, *The Fly* undoubtedly remains Cronenberg's most popular work.

Cronenberg's last true horror film, the deeply unsettling *Dead Ringers*, would hit theatres in 1988. A tale about twin gynecologists (Jeremy Irons in both roles) who share everything in life until an actress (Geneviève



Videodrome
British Quad poster

FROM NOV 25 IN THE WEST END AND ALL OVER LONDON

Bujold) threatens to come between them, the movie is based upon the 1977 novel *Twins*, as well as real-life New York-based identical twin gynecologists Cyril and Stewart Marcus. Remarkable, layered performances and a disturbing storyline were not enough to bring in audiences, though, and the movie floundered at the box office.

Though he has long abandoned the horror genre in favour of more mainstream projects, Cronenberg's films over the past two decades – including *Crash* (1996), *eXistenZ* (1999), *A History of Violence* (2005), *Eastern Promises* (2007), and *Cosmopolis* (2012) – still manage to retain darkly subversive elements and concepts, and an off-kilter quality that marked his earlier works. A fiercely Canadian filmmaker, he resisted making any of his films in the United States until *Map to the Stars* (2014), which required a brief shooting period in Los Angeles.

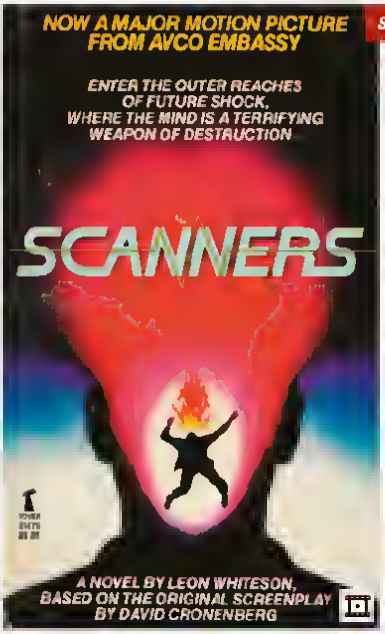
I understand that your initial aim was to be a biochemist. What made you change your mind and get into filmmaking instead?

It was really accidental. I always thought I'd be a novelist, frankly, and I also loved science, so I thought I could kind of do what Isaac Asimov did, which was to be a legitimate scientist and a legitimate writer as well. But filmmaking was never on the horizon for me, really, especially since at that time in Canada there was very little feature filmmaking – almost none, actually. It was either the CBC or the National Film Board, and there was really not an independent film industry. So, it seemed to me that film was very far away. It was just something that you enjoyed and consumed, but not something you would ever do yourself. So it was really underground filmmaking that was the key for me. It was the '60s, and there was never really a question of making feature films or movies in the Hollywood sense; it was underground filmmaking – grab a camera and do your little thing, you know? And that was the hippie ethos at the time, which was that you didn't need to spend years trailing around after some director carrying film cans, you could just invent yourself as a filmmaker. It was a great, really wonderful moment in Canadian and Toronto filmmaking, where it was both underground filmmakers who connected with the New York Underground and [avant garde filmmaker] Jonas Mekas and the New York Film Co-Op. And we established a film co-op of our own here in Canada, in Toronto [the Toronto Film Co-Op], which I think still exists in some form. Ivan Reitman was one of the founders, as was I, and the idea of that was to, once again, subvert the concept of Hollywood filmmaking and distribution. You make your own films with your friends, and with your friends you find a way to get your films out to people who want to see them. So, there were screenings in the streets of Toronto at night. You'd set up a sheet and get a projector and people would just walk by and sit on the sidewalk and watch your movie. At the same time, universities

or high schools or anyone who was interested in seeing underground films could access them through the film co-op, which was a non-profit sort of distribution centre for underground filmmakers. It was pretty exciting, and pretty fluid and loose and very congenial and very much in the tone of the '60s. And then at a certain point I had to decide if [filmmaking] was really going to be my profession and, if it was going to be my profession, then I had to be able to make money doing it. And that's when I started to think in terms of actually doing commercial movies – which meant movies that I got paid for doing, rather than movies where I got grants to do [them], and so on, and [have to] scrounge money. And that's really how I got started. I end up being kind of surprised, even now, being a filmmaker.

When you made your first feature-length film,* Shivers, *you were still developing your directing skills. What, if anything, made the job easier for you?

Well, really being in the context of a commercial filmmaking entity which was Cinepix in Montreal, and those guys – [producers/founders] John Dunning and André Link – were incredible. They were like a film school, really. And that's where I learned not about film theory, but film reality. Fantastic. And you know, there really were no film courses in Canada at the time. You could go to the London School of Film Technique or go to L.A. – in terms of learning the practicalities of filmmaking, as well as some theory and so on – but in Toronto you were kind of on your own. And I couldn't afford to go to London, some people I knew did. So, it was, really, writing the script for *Shivers*, which attracted the attention of Cinépix, because they were looking for something that could be released in America. They had made soft-core porn films that were very sweet, actually, in retrospect, and were really kind of political and funny in the Quebec manner, and they were mostly in French. And they found distribution in Europe, but they couldn't sell those films in the US. So when I came up with the idea for *Shivers* and approached John Dunning with it, they were very interested. Horror was a genre that you could sell in the US. [but] they only had my movies *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future* to look at. And I remember John Dunning at one point said, 'Well, we know that you have a very good sort of film sexual sensibility. We're just not sure what kind it is!" [Laughs.] They were worried that I was maybe too intellectual, too obscure, too eccentric, too subversive for what they were looking for, but they loved my script and they knew that the script could work for what they needed. And they tried, really, to buy the script so somebody else [Jonathan Demme] could direct it. And even though they were very sweet to me, I said, "Look, I'm not selling it. The only one who is going to direct this is me. So, if you want it, you've got to take me as well." And ultimately they did that. I knew nothing about real filmmaking in the sense of commercial filmmaking. I had shot my own movies myself. *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future* were about



Scanners tie-in novel



French movie poster

The Dead Zone
Spanish poster



Rabid
Spanish poster



65 minutes each. I lit them myself, shot them, edited them. So, I knew that stuff, but I didn't know what a production manager was, you know? I didn't know what a line producer was. I didn't know any of the mechanics, the logistics and the personnel of a commercial movie. And since we shot *Shivers* in about fourteen days, I didn't have a lot of time to figure that out. [Laughs.] It was an intense learning experience, to say the least. But, really, it was just the sweetest, most detailed and gentle support from Dunning and Link. And Ivan Reitman was involved as well because he had directed a couple of commercial movies and he was working for Cinépix at the time, and he was helping to oversee my first two movies.

When I spoke with John Dunning, he had great things to say about working with you, but he also mentioned the infamous* Saturday Night *article by Robert Fulford. Did you feel betrayed in any way by Fulford's comments?

Well, it's interesting. I think he felt betrayed somehow because, you see, he had given my first movie, *Stereo*, a rather nice review, saying that it was an elegant, dream-like movie. [So] I invited him to see *Shivers* because I really thought that he'd understand where I was going, and he was repulsed by it. [Laughs.] He didn't get it at all. And that review, you know, to me it's still a model of meanness and bitterness, because it's one thing to say, "I hate this film; it's disgusting and it's repulsive." But what he said was, "We shouldn't allow this guy to be making films. And in fact, if he has to make films like this, we should not have a film industry." Now that, for me, is going beyond the pale.

Of course, as a reviewer, it's completely legitimate for him to hate your movie and to be completely articulate about that. But he had more influence than that and, in fact, it really did stall the Canadian film industry for a couple of years. And now Fulford continues to deny that, and says that I used his review to sort of gain some kind of sympathy and free press. [Laughs.] It's a nice spin he's put on it, and he actually thinks that he's enhanced my career. But the reality is that it made it very difficult to get *Rabid* financed because the CFDC was afraid to put money into it. We had to find some sneaky ways to get money into *Rabid* by Cinépix doing a package of films and *Rabid* was one of them, and so on. So, really, it probably cost me a year of my filmmaking life, that review. That's the bottom line.

One of the themes that appears in several of your films, such as* Shivers, Rabid, The Brood *and* Scanners, *is the doctor as a type of "mad scientist." That is, a medical professional that conducts experiments on people, which unleashes a threat on the population. Is this a criticism in any way of doctors, medicine or the healthcare industry? Or is it just an effective thematic device to use?

No, it's something else entirely. First of all, you're creating a drama, and as George Bernard Shaw said, "Conflict is drama." It's much more interesting when things go wrong than when things go right, in terms of drama, obviously. So, you don't have much of a story if every-

thing goes right, and everything ends well and there are no problems. That's not dramatic, is it? You might want it to be that way in your own life but on screen, it would be kind of boring. And on top of that, you have my interest in the human body as the major, the first fact of human existence. The body is us. I'm not religious, I don't believe in an afterlife. I don't believe in a spirit that's separate from the body. So, you take the body consciousness and the idea of conflict, then you add to that my interest in our attempts to modify the human body to deal with reality of the human body, [and] that immediately pretty much takes you into either biological sciences or medicine. So, those are all of my approaches and interests that come together to then discuss, really, the technology of the human body. By which I mean, our attempts to manipulate the reality of the human body, which is of course, the prime interest to us – not just for health, but for longevity, sexuality, for all of those other things. We, as humans, have never accepted the world as it is given to us, we want to change it, we want to see how things can be different and better. That's why we don't live outside in forests, we live in houses. We live in buildings that protect us from the weather. We don't accept that when the sun goes down, we should live in the darkness – we create artificial light. And so too, we don't accept that when we get sick we should just die or be sick – we want to do something about it. And that's what I mean by the "technology of the human body." So, these are the themes and concerns that come up again and again in my movies. But to me, these are fairly basic things. I don't think they're extraordinary; I think you'll find them all over the place. And it does get political in a certain sense, because as soon as you're dealing with those things, you're dealing with pretty interesting and sometimes quite hot questions about how we should approach these things and what the social implications are, what the economic implications of these things are, even to the extent that you're reading about should rich people be the only ones who have access to replacement kidneys, and all of that kind of stuff. So, these are basic questions, but they are questions that have a huge ripple effect.

Film critic Robin Wood once labeled your films as being "pro conformity," while you obviously felt they were the opposite. I'm wondering whether you feel that he was missing the point of your work?

Well, yes. The problem with political criticism is that it ends up being very doctrinaire and, I think, very schematic. And you end up missing the forest for the trees. And in my case, I think that he totally did [miss the point] and I felt that he really should have seen my films as – to put it bluntly – to be on his side politically,



rather than opposed to it. But that happens, and that was a kind of instructive moment for me to see how very misunderstood you could be – even by a very intelligent, interesting critic. And there's nothing you can do about it. I mean, I certainly stated my case, he stated his case. Being Canadians, we were cordial about it. But I just totally think he missed the boat, and in a big way.

Do you have a favourite project that you've worked on? I believe that at one point, you mentioned* The Brood *being one of your favourite movies, but I'm wondering if that's changed?

I don't think I ever said that, really. I believe I said it was one of my most personal movies.

Oh, okay. I see.

Yes. I can't separate my movies from the circumstances of making them. Even if I had a personal favourite, that wouldn't be based on pure cinematic response. You know, I can't see my movies like movies, in short. So, I don't really even think in terms of favourite movies or not; I might think of great sort of personal moments while making a movie, but that might have more to do with the weather or the people I was making the movie with, than with the actual quality of the movie itself. So, I'm saying that I don't really have a favourite movie in that sense.

Where do you find inspiration for your films? From dreams or nightmares?

That's really an impossible question to answer. It just comes from life in general. Your interpretations of life, things that you're thinking of. The specifics of what you do could come from anywhere, they could come from a dream, which has happened to me. But it could also come from a newspaper article, for example, for *Dead Ringers*, there were some items about the actual Marcus brothers. So, it can come from anywhere. But the drive to create it comes from inside in a very deep place, and that's difficult to quantify. I don't think you can really analyze it.

THE FILMS OF WILLIAM FRUET

ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL TRAJECTORIES HAS GOT TO BE THAT OF FILMMAKER WILLIAM FRUET BORN IN 1933 IN LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, FRUET STARTED IN THE CANADIAN FILM INDUSTRY IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, WITH A ROLE IN THE 1963 FILM *DRYLANDERS* before embarking on a career as a writer, director and producer. His first co-writing credit was for the iconic 1970 Canadian drama *Goin' Down the Road*, which told of two friends from Nova Scotia who travel to Ontario in the hopes of making a better life for themselves in Toronto, only to ultimately abandon their city lives. Making the shift to directing, Fruet helmed the highly acclaimed 1972 drama *Wedding in White* before moving into genre film territory with 1976's *Death Weekend*. Despite the critical lambasting he received for making the film, Fruet would continue to work in the horror and thriller genres, directing such flicks as 1980's *Funeral Home* (a.k.a *Cries in the Night*), 1983's *Spasms* and 1987's *Blue Monkey*.

DEATH WEEKEND (1976)

STARRING BRENDA VACCARO, DON STROUD AND CHUCK SHAMATA

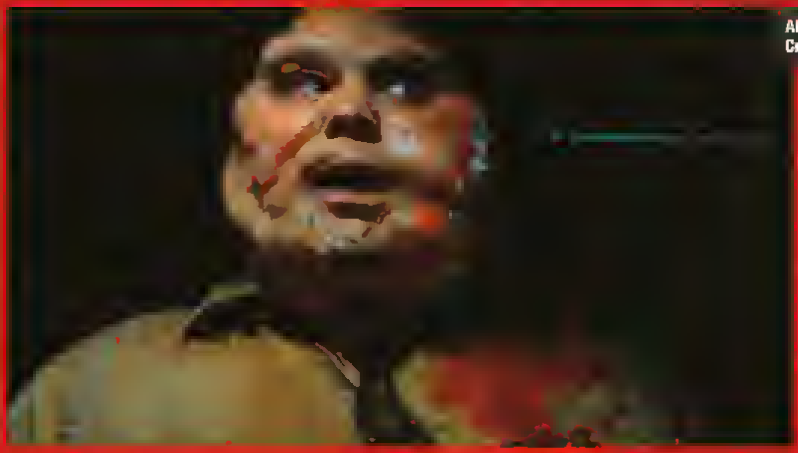
Wealthy dentist Harry (Chuck Shamata) and his fashion-model companion, Diane (Brenda Vaccaro), are on their way to his lakeside manor house for a weekend party. Diane admits to being a car enthusiast and asks if she can do some of the driving, but she turns out to be a bit of a speed demon and attracts the attention of a carload of thugs who try to goad her into a drag race. Diane gets the best of them and forces them off the road, leaving their misogynistic leader, Lep (Don Stroud), to vow revenge.

Once Harry and Diane are at the mansion, the dentist reveals himself to be a sleazeball, spying on and photographing Diane via two-way mirrors in the bedroom and bathroom while she undresses and showers. Meanwhile, having gotten back on the road, Lep and his three companions inquire at a local gas station and find out where Harry lives.



Later, when Harry admits to Diane that there will be no party and that he brought her to the remote manor to have sex, she wants to leave – but before she can make her exit, the thugs invade the house. They're initially content to trash the mansion, but their behaviour escalates to assaulting Diane and committing murder. Diane turns the tables on her attackers, though, and *Death Weekend* lives up to the grim promise of its title.

Also released as *The House By the Lake*, the movie was bashed for its disturbing subject matter and garnered vitriolic reviews in the Canadian press, yet it has remained one of the more effective rape-revenge thrillers.



Al Waxman as Warren Crowley in *Spasms*

FUNERAL HOME
A.K.A. CRIES IN THE NIGHT (1980)
STARRING KAY HAWTREY, LESLEH DONALDSON AND BARRY MORSE

Teenaged Heather (Lesleh Donaldson) has just arrived in town, where she'll be helping her grandmother, Mrs. Chalmers (Kay Hawtrey), convert her house to a bed and breakfast for the summer. Grandma – whose husband, James, simply vanished one day – isn't too fond of the idea of opening up her home to strangers, but she needs the money and so she and Heather welcome a number of guests, including kindly Mr. Davis (Barry Morse) and an obnoxious middle-aged couple, Harry and Florie. When Mrs. Chalmers accuses the pair of "living in sin" and asks them to leave the house, they refuse; later that night, while they're parked at a nearby quarry, an unseen person pushes their car off the cliff, sending the couple to their deaths.

Soon, other guests of the rooming house (which, appropriately enough, used to be a funeral home) turn up dead, and Heather hears eerie voices drifting up from the coffin-filled basement. Grandma warns her that she "must never go down to the cellar," and it's clear the old woman is hiding something in a subterranean chamber. Does Grandma have Gramps locked away underground, or is she hiding something even more sinister?



The *Psycho*-influenced *Cries in the Night* was the first genre-themed pic to feature starlet Donaldson, who would go on to appear in several more Canuck horror flicks, including *Happy Birthday to Me*, *Deadly Eyes* and *Curtains*.

SPASMS (1983)
STARRING OLIVER REED, PETER FONDA AND AL WAXMAN

Jason Kincaid (Oliver Reed) is a wealthy businessman who was bitten by a giant snake while on an island hunting trip. Haunted by visions of the monstrous creature – with whom he shares a sort of psychic link, presumably passed on with the snake's venom – Kincaid arranges for the serpent to be caught and shipped to him. He enlists the services of Dr. Thomas Brazillian (Peter Fonda), a psychiatrist doing research into ESP, to help study it. But others want to get their hands on the creature, including a cult of snake worshippers that has hired the slippery Warren Crowley (Al Waxman) to help obtain the reptile. The snake escapes, of course, and terrorizes the university campus where it was being held.





(1977)

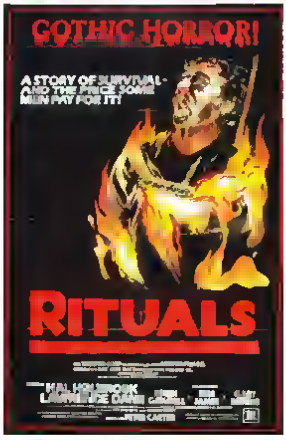
RITUALS

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR/PRODUCER LAWRENCE DANE, SCREENWRITER IAN SUTHERLAND AND PRODUCTION DESIGNER KAREN BROMLEY

YEARS BEFORE PAMELA AND JASON VOORHEES AND A HOST OF OTHER DEMENTED AND DISFIGURED INDIVIDUALS DECIDED TO USE A forest as their slay ground, a little 1977 Canadian-made film titled *Rituals* featured a group of men relentlessly stalked by a mysterious killer. But unlike those later films – which included the *Friday the 13th* series and *The Burning* – the environment in *Rituals* proves to be just as much a danger to the men as to the deranged assassin himself.

Harry (Hal Holbrook, *The Fog*), Mitzi (Lawrence Dane, *Scanners*), Marty (Robin Gammell), Abel (Ken James) and Marty's brother D.J. (Gary Reineke) are five doctors whose yearly vacation takes them to a remote, wooded area of northern Ontario known as the Cauldron of the Moon. That night around a campfire, the doctors make light of the various medical mishaps they've been part of – all the while being watched by an unseen intruder. The following morning, the group awakens to find that someone has stolen their boots. Since D.J. is the only one to bring additional shoes, he goes off in search of a hydro dam to get help.

That night, the group is startled to find that someone has visited the campsite, leaving a deer head impaled on a wooden pole with a snake wrapped around the stick – which the doctors recognize as the Rod of Asclepius, the symbol of healthcare and medicine. They decide to wrap their feet in rags and head off toward the dam, but along the way, someone drops a bees' nest in their path, killing one of them. Later, while trying to cross a river, another gets his foot ensnared in a bear trap, which forces the remaining two doctors to carry him through treacherous waters, dense wilderness and hot, dust-whipped terrain.



Along the way, the exhausted, feuding men are left additional items by the killer – military medals and WWII-era X-rays – that suggest their stalker is a disgruntled veteran who was haphazardly patched together by army surgeons, and is now taking out his hatred for doctors by targeting them.

Rituals was directed by the late, UK-born Peter Carter (who had previously helmed the classic 1972 Canuck drama *The Rowdyman*, produced by Dane) from a screenplay by up-and-coming writer Ian Sutherland. Well-acted and incredibly mature – it's one of the first horror films to portray an openly gay character in a realistic



Lawrence Dane as Mitzi

"WHAT YOU'RE EXAMINING IS PEOPLE IN EXTREMIS; WHAT GOOD FRIENDS, SUPPOSEDLY, ARE PREPARED TO DO TO SURVIVE."

light – Carter's rural revenge yarn is one of the most grueling survivalist horror flicks ever made.

Though Stephen King praised the film in his 1981 book *Danse Macabre*, *Rituals* never received the critical recognition it deserves. Released in the US under the title *The Creeper*, the film floundered at the box office, and for years was relegated to a murky VHS release and bootlegs, before specialty label Code Red issued a great-looking DVD treatment in 2011, sourced from Dane's personal print. The cast and crew, including art director Karen Bromley, relive the making of this remarkable movie.

Where did the idea for* Rituals *come from?

Lawrence Dane: The project was brought to me by the film's associate producer – a friend of mine, Lee Broker, who had come across it through an association with the author, Ian Sutherland. We liked it and optioned it and got Ian to do a rewrite. So, it was a wonderful experience. And we didn't mind the rough-and-readiness of it all; it made it more appealing for us actors to capture that veracity, that reality.

Ian, how did you come to write the script for* Rituals*?

Ian Sutherland: Well, it actually comes from a canoe trip that a friend and I took up the Missinaibi River [in northern Ontario], back when I was 26 [or] 27. And in those days, it was – and still is – a pretty wild river. And most of the time, at least back then, there was no one else around, so if you got into trouble, you were in trouble. Because no planes could get in, and nobody can get in, except people who bring canoes down that river. It used to be part of the old fur trading [route]. But, when you leave an urban setting like Toronto and go into that – and I hadn't really been prepared for it – it was strange. And the idea came from that, it's isolated, and what if something happened? So, from that spark, I started to work on [the script].

In this environment, these urbanites are basically like babes in the wood...

IS: Yes, to some degree. And also, it's that classic drama of separation and initiation in return; what is it you've learned from the situation? And the device of making them doctors to give you that level of sophistication, and men out of their element and kind of stung by what has happened to them. Then, what you're examining is people in extremis; what good friends, supposedly, are prepared to do to survive. And there's a bit about betrayal, and trying to hold on to some kind of humanity under that sort of pressure. So, all of those elements came out as I started to build the story. I had pretty much finished the first draft when I took it to Larry and Peter.

I understand that there were some changes made to the script.

IS: Well, the biggest thing was, when I wrote the script originally, [the characters] were all in their early thirties, and they were just young doctors. You know, they had gone to university and medical

Promotional stills







school together and it was a reunion. But the cast was ten to fifteen years older than what I had originally written. So, there were quite a bit of rewrites. And Hal [Holbrook] was about ten years older than the other four.

LD: Originally, we went into the wilderness on a train and trekked inland, and we were going to shoot it that way on the Algoma [Central] Railway. We decided that it made more sense to go right into the depth of the forest in an airplane and be left there that way.

Can you tell me a bit about the shoot?

LD: It was shot in Batchawana Bay, on Lake Superior. We lived in a lodge on Lake Superior at the time, and it was the first movie – and only movie – that I ever shot in continuity. We wore the same costumes throughout and allowed them to age.

Was that done on purpose, or out of necessity?

LD: It was done on purpose. And it made common sense because we were shooting in the wilderness and you could turn the camera ten degrees and have a new location. So, we were able to chronologically tell the story. And as the actors "died off," they went home.

Were there any problems with the making of the film?

LD: One problem we had in the completion of the picture was, in that last sequence [set in the cabin of the killer], there's one scene that people consider to be darker.

Yes, I wanted to ask you why that particular scene is much darker.

LD: Well, we purposely made it darker, after the fact. We decided to go with it [that way] because some of the film was ruined in the lab – and this was after Hal Holbrook had left. He had finished shooting because it was done in continuity and that was the last stuff we shot. And something happened to the film, so we decided to make it even darker, to give the feeling of "darkness" – that when the lights were out, they were out. And we used minimalistic lighting. It kind of works, in a strange, quirky way.

Karen Bromley: I think that for most people, they thought that for that [scene], it was intended to be that dark. Thank God it didn't happen earlier on in the story, because it might have been obtrusive. But I think in the end they covered it very well, it was late enough in the movie and at a point when everything had become very dark, deceptive and terrible. And I don't think the average viewer noticed anything wrong.

Was the cabin scene shot on location?

KB: No, out in Kleinburg Studios. I built the exterior to the cabin down by the river and there were some trees and the remnants of an old log cabin that had been used in the *Forest Rangers* TV series. And we renovated that and fixed it up. That became the exterior where Hal approached it. The actual interiors we built inside in the studio at Kleinburg and we built

it using real logs for part of it, and used some reclaimed lumber to get the actual age. One of the wonderful things about it was that when the crew finished filming up in the woods, they drove down to the studio in the late afternoon to come and look at the set, and Peter and everybody came in and Hal Holbrook walked into this little place and lay down in the bunk and went to sleep. I've always said that that was the best compliment I ever got on a set from an actor. But we had little pieces of beef jerky hung, we had actual animal skins stretched, we had a lot of really authentic woodsman's tool and artifacts that we used in that little cabin set.

How was it working with Peter Carter?

IS: He made six or seven pictures up here and I got brought in on each one to either rewrite the script or doctor some element of the script. So, we worked quite a bit after *Rituals*. He had been a first AD [assistant director] for the CBC for years. We became really good friends and I enjoyed his company a lot. And Peter dying [at age 48, in 1983] was a big shock. He wasn't exactly well, but he was tough-as-nails. And he had real chansma and was great fun to be with and was witty. I knew him as a terrific guy.

What do you say to those who think* Rituals *was made because of the success of 1972's* Deliverance*?

LD: Well, they're not very thoughtful people because they are different films. In *Deliverance*, you know who the antagonists are. In our picture, you don't know who the antagonists are [until the end]. So, it's a mystery. You have a mystery angle that you never had in *Deliverance*. And another thing you had more of in *Rituals* than you had in *Deliverance* was people turning against each other.

IS: They wanted to use that in the advertising. In fact, I think they did. [At the time] I don't know that I had even read *Deliverance*. [But] there is quite a difference.

In the original script for* Rituals*, that mystery is never really resolved.

IS: In the original script, and subsequent scripts up to a point, we wanted it to be a human agent, but I wanted [the characters] to start thinking it was supernatural. But you never know. In the end, I wanted it to be a blank. I would have loved to have seen it that way, but the people at the CFDC [Canadian Film Development Corporation] said, "No, no. You have to have an explanation."

So, the CFDC didn't want an ambiguous ending...

IS: I think we got some money from them, so we had to have an explanation. And that's why we had the subjective camera. So, you're seeing it from the point-of-view of the killer. But I never really wanted that, I just wanted things to happen. I would have rather had it that there's four dead guys and one survivor, and he's sitting on the highway. And maybe he's going to get arrested for the murders, or maybe he did it, and this is his story. But it was not to be, and that's one of those compromises that you have to make.



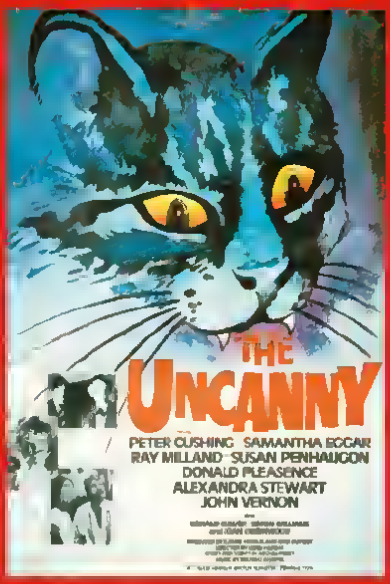
Gary Reinike as D.J.

FURTHER VIEWING

THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE (1976)

STARRING JODIE FOSTER, MARTIN SHEEN AND ALEXIS SMITH
DIRECTED BY NICOLAS GESSNER

Rynn (Jodie Foster) is a precocious thirteen-year-old whose parents never seem to be around. She turns away anyone who asks to see her father, including landlady Mrs. Hallett (Alexis Smith) and her pedophile son, Frank (Martin Sheen). Mrs. Hallett finally forces her way into the house under the pretense of retrieving some jars she left in the cellar, but something in the basement frightens her and she's killed when the cellar door whacks her on the head. Enter Mario (Scott Jacoby), a boy who falls for Rynn and helps her conceal Mrs. Hallett's death. When Mario falls ill and Rynn goes to the hospital to visit him, Frank discovers the shocking secret Rynn has been hiding all along.



THE UNCANNY (1977)

STARRING PETER CUSHING, SAMANTHA EGGAR AND RAY MILLAND
DIRECTED BY DENIS HÉROUX

This Canadian/UK co-production is an anthology very much in the vein of the classic Amicus portmanteau flicks released several years earlier (No wonder, as it was co-produced by Amicus co-founder Milton Subotsky). The plot has writer Wilbur Grey (Peter Cushing) contacting publisher Frank Richards (Ray Milland) to discuss his book about murderous cats, and relates three of the stories: a wealthy old woman is murdered over an inheritance and her cats avenge her death, an orphaned girl gets revenge on her mean cousin through the use of witchcraft and her pet black cat; and a murdered actress' cat exacts revenge on the husband (Donald Pleasence) who killed her.

CATHY'S CURSE (1977)

STARRING ALAN SCARFE, BEVERLY MURRAY AND RANDI ALLEN
DIRECTED BY EDDY MATALON

This Canadian/French co-production begins with the death of a father and daughter in a fiery car accident. Decades later, George Gimble (Alan Scarfe), the now-grown son/brother of the aforementioned victims, brings his wife and their daughter, Cathy (Randi Allen), back to his childhood home. It's later discovered that Cathy might be possessed by the spirit of the long-dead girl, who forces Cathy to visit acts of supernatural evil on her family and others.


Cathy's Curse

MICHAEL IRONSIDE: CANADA'S TOUGH GUY

CANADIAN ACTOR MICHAEL IRONSIDE HAS BUILT A CAREER OUT OF PLAYING SADISTIC VILLAINS and tough-guy heroes. The Toronto-born Ironside has appeared in more than 200 movies and TV shows since he made his screen debut in 1977. Here are four of his most memorable turns in Canadian-produced horror films.

SCANNERS (1981)

STARRING STEPHEN LACK, JENNIFER O'NEILL AND PATRICK MCGOOHAN
DIRECTED BY DAVID CRONENBERG

In his breakout role, Ironside is Darryl Revok, the psychopathic leader of a renegade group of genetically mutated humans called "scanners" – people who can telepathically inflict pain, injury or death on others. Wanting to use this power for the destruction of humankind, Revok has an opponent in Cameron Vale (Stephen Lack), a powerful young scanner who has been recruited to find and destroy him.

VISITING HOURS (1982)

STARRING LEE GRANT, LINDA PURL AND WILLIAM SHATNER
DIRECTED BY JEAN-CLAUDE LORD

This Montreal-shot slasher film casts Ironside as the sadistic Colt Hewker, a women-hating serial killer who photographs his victims as they're dying. He harbours a homicidal grudge against outspoken feminist activist and TV journalist Deborah Ballin (Lee Grant), and brutally attacks her in her home. When he learns that she survived the assault, Hewker tracks Ballin down to the hospital where she's recovering, determined to finish what he started.

AMERICAN NIGHTMARE (1983)

STARRING LAWRENCE S. DAY, LORA STALEY AND NEIL DAINARD
DIRECTED BY DON MCBREARTY

In searching for his younger sister, a wealthy young man, Eric Blake (Lawrence S. Day) must maneuver his way through the various porn shops, strip bars and seedy hotels of early-'80s Toronto (standing in for the US). Ironside plays a cop, Sergeant Skylar, who is working the case of the missing young woman. What neither of them knows is that Blake's sister is already dead – murdered by a rubber-gloved, straight razor-wielding maniac who has been stalking prostitutes and strippers in the area.

WATCHERS (1988)

STARRING COREY HAIM, CHRISTOPHER CARY AND BARBARA WILLIAMS
DIRECTED BY JON HESS

In this very loose adaptation of the bestselling Dean Koontz novel of the same name, Ironside is no-nonsense NSD Agent Johnson, who is sent to locate a genetically enhanced golden retriever and a large, animal-like being, both of which have escaped from an experimental research lab. After finding the highly intelligent canine, a teenaged boy, Travis Cornell (Corey Haim), becomes the target of not only Johnson, but also the monstrous animal – which has been tracking the dog and exhibits an unrelenting compulsion to kill it.



Watchers



Visiting Hours

(1980)

THE CHANGELING

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PETER MEDAK

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THE MAJORITY OF CANADIAN HORROR PRODUCTIONS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR LOW-BUDGET LOOK AND FEEL. An exception to this is the elegant 1980 chiller *The Changeling*. One of the most effective entries in the haunted house subgenre, the film tells of composer John Russell (George C. Scott: *Dr. Strangelove*, *Patton*) who, after witnessing the deaths of his wife and daughter in a tragic winter traffic collision, moves to Seattle to try and move on with his life.



Taking up a university teaching position, Russell rents a large, old mansion from the local historical society, but soon finds that he is not the only one there. In addition to being awakened each morning at 6 a.m. by a loud thumping noise that rumbles throughout the house, Russell hears whispers, witnesses doors opening and sinks filling with water on their own, and sees the apparition of a drowned boy in his bathtub.

After an attic window shatters, Russell goes upstairs to investigate and finds a secret room. Judging by its contents – a wooden desk with a book dated 1909, a music box, some toy soldiers and a small wheelchair – it once belonged to a child.

Teaming up with the historical-society member who rented out the home, Claire Norman (Trish Van Devere: *The Hearse*), the pair's attempt to uncover the identity of the restless spirit – which includes inviting a medium to the house to hold a séance – leads them to a powerful senator, Joseph Cammichael (Melvyn Douglas: *The Tenant*, *Ghost Story*), who may not be who he appears to be.

Featuring solid performances by Scott, Van Devere and, in the role of a caustic police captain, John Colicos, *The Changeling* also benefits from John Coquillon's creepy cinematography (with roaming shots down long hallways and along darkened staircases being particularly effective), a haunting score by Ken Wannberg and Rick Wilkins, and the assured direction of Hungarian-born filmmaker Peter Medak. Produced on a budget of $7.6 million, *The Changeling* was released in March of 1980 to largely positive reviews. It cleaned up at that year's Genie Awards (now called the Canadian Screen Awards), where it garnered numerous wins, including Best Motion Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay from Another Medium, Best Achievement in Cinematography and Best Achievement in Art Direction/Production Design.

Medak, who began his career in the early 1960s working on such projects as Hammer Films' 1962 ver-



George C. Scott as John Russell

sion of *The Phantom of the Opera* (where he was *a* second assistant director), has an output which includes directorial credits for *The Krays* (1990), *Romeo is Bleeding* (1993) and *Species II* (1998), and episodes of numerous TV programs, including *Space 1999*; the revamped *Twilight Zone*, *Tales from The Crypt*; the *Masters of Horror* segment "The Washingtonians", *Breaking Bad*; and *Hannibal* He tells us about creating *The Changeling*

What were the origins of* The Changeling*? Was there already a story from the author, [playwright] Russell Hunter? Or was he commissioned to write a story for the film?

I think it came from an article, a newspaper article Apparently it was a journalistic thing And it had *a* kind of a mysterious journey, because the very first script was written by Allan Scott, who wrote the script for *Don't Look Now* But that was the first script and it was long before I ever got there William Gray did an adaptation What I loved about the script was that it was a psychological ghost story, and *a* mystery as well A classic kind of ghost story

What do you think about the claim that these events actually happened to Hunter – that the house he lived in was supposedly haunted?

I don't know it was supposedly based on true events

I understand that before you became attached to the project, there were apparently another director who was slated to work on it.

Yes, his name was Donald Cammell and he worked on *Performance* (1970), Nicolas Roeg's first movie as a director But I don't know what actually happened – maybe there were some creative differences He wanted to do it in black-and-white or something I'm not sure

How did you become involved with the film?

How this whole thing with *The Changeling* happened on my end is that I got *a* phone call from *a* friend of mine who I did a movie for in Los Angeles, who said that a gentleman by the name of Joel Michaels was going to call me and would I be interested in looking at this script called *The Changeling* And then when I got the script, I really became petrified just reading it I said, "I just have to make this movie " You know, something always tells you if you have to do something When I turned up, I basically had to change the whole concept of the movie The producers – Michaels and Garth Drabinsky – they were very close to shooting at that time and wound up postponing it And the reason was that they had [initially] wanted to make it in a real location, in a house that did not look haunted

Tell me about the house in the film.

It was an incredible set It was built on a stage in Vancouver it was built on three different levels – the living room, the staircase going down It was wonderful Trevor Williams was the name of the designer who did it The exterior of the house was completely fake The previous director, Cammell, he wanted to do it in a house that didn't look haunted They were going to shoot inside that house And when I came along, we changed it We built a set, and we built a three-story façade A three-sided house, and the garden, the gates and drive[way] We did the façade because I basically had to set fire to it and destroy it at the end of the film





Publicity still featuring George C. Scott and Melvyn Douglas

Did you shoot any of the film in Toronto?
No, I didn't shoot in Toronto. We shot at a university in Vancouver. Everything that you see was either shot in Vancouver, or in Seattle. And we shot a week in New York – at Lincoln Center at the beginning, during the apartment scenes. And Melvyn Douglas' office was in Seattle.

How was it working with George C. Scott?
After we cleared up the problems with the set, I met with George C. Scott and had a great meeting with him. And once I went through the entire film and explained what I wanted to do with it, he had this amazed look on his face that I will never forget. It was a very important piece of my life, working with him. He was a huge, huge contribution to the film.

Was Scott hired after you came on board, or was he involved already in the film?
No, he was already involved [in order] to raise the money.

How about Trish Van Devere, who was actually Scott's wife?
She was already involved. We cast Melvyn Douglas and John Colicos.

Did you encounter any obstacles while shooting the film?
We actually experienced some problems getting [the bouncing ball] shot. George's reaction to suddenly seeing the ball again is fabulous, but the special effects guys – well, they were more like prop guys – had brought these weighted balls to do the shot of the ball bouncing down the stairs. The ball was meant to stop dead in front of George and we did about three takes and each one was completely screwed up. I was furious because we'd had meetings about how this was going to work, but it just wasn't happening. Eventually I said, "Give me that fucking ball!" Then, in front of the whole crew, I rushed up the stairs with it, turned around and suddenly thought to myself, "I'm going to look like a complete idiot if this doesn't stop exactly where it's supposed to." I slowly released the ball and it went bouncing down the stairs and stopped dead on the spot in front of George. That's the very take we used in the film and it's fantastic.

Tell me a bit about the séance scene. It's very effective.
I did my research for the scene and I went to two or three [seances]. I had a brother who died when I was very young and – I always felt very connected to him all my life. And in the two or three seances I went to, it was kind of spooky, but in a wonderful kind of way. I was very sensitive and was very attuned to that.



The Changeling

"WHAT I LOVED ABOUT THE SCRIPT WAS THAT IT WAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL GHOST STORY, AND A MYSTERY AS WELL."

Upon release,* The Changeling *won a slew of Genie Awards, including Best Motion Picture. Were you surprised by the accolades?

It was wonderful, a huge surprise to me. Chris Plummer, who is an old friend, and Helen Shaver – we were all sitting together and they were teasing me and saying, "If you had been Canadian, you would have gotten an award as well." Everyone got an award except me. It was great that the picture got those kinds of notices. And it was great for both Joel and Garth, as it was the beginning of their producing career, and they went on to do many things.

Is it true that the film was supposed to be remade? And that you were considered or approached to direct the remake?

Joel and Garth were thinking of remaking it at one time. And then they made a deal with a company and they had developed a script – and then it never happened. I wasn't sure whether I should do it or not... but then so many people haven't seen it. But I don't know if that will come about.

If offered the project again, would you do it?

I think so because I feel that the film has been ripped off so many time over the years. Part of me says, "No," and then the other part of me says, "I should do it myself." If it was really on the go, I would like to do it. But it would be hard to find someone as good as George C. Scott was in it. Anthony Hopkins would be very good for it.

What do you think of its reputation now as being a classic of the genre?

It is wonderful that people, even after 30 years, come up to me and say, "My God, you've done *The Changeling*. I've never been so scared in my life!" It makes me very happy and we did the best we could. I did *The Changeling* very much as Hitchcock would have done it. It was all in the shooting and the acting. And I'm very, very fond of the movie and the making of it, and working with George and the designer. It doesn't happen all the time, maybe once every ten, fifteen years if you're lucky. All one hopes for is to get the chance to do a great movie.



Jamie Lee Curtis as Kim

(1980)

PROM NIGHT

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PAUL LYNCH

MAPLE SYRUP SLASHERS – TRUE CRIME-DIME-MRDS HORROR PICS produced in the wake of John Carpenter's 1978 game-changer *Halloween* – have often been overshadowed by the exploits of their knife-wielding American cousins. An exception, though, is the fondly remembered 1980 cult flick *Prom Night*. It remains a classic example of the slasher genre, despite detractors who assert that it's nothing more than a poorly executed version of *Halloween* with hints of *Saturday Night Fever* and *Carrie* thrown in.

"It's *Halloween* in a high school. I won't disagree with that," confesses the film's director, Liverpool-born Paul Lynch, noting that Carpenter's iconic horror film was itself born from Bob Clark's 1974 Canuck proto-slasher *Black Christmas*. "*Black Christmas* led to *Halloween* and *Halloween* led to *Prom Night*."



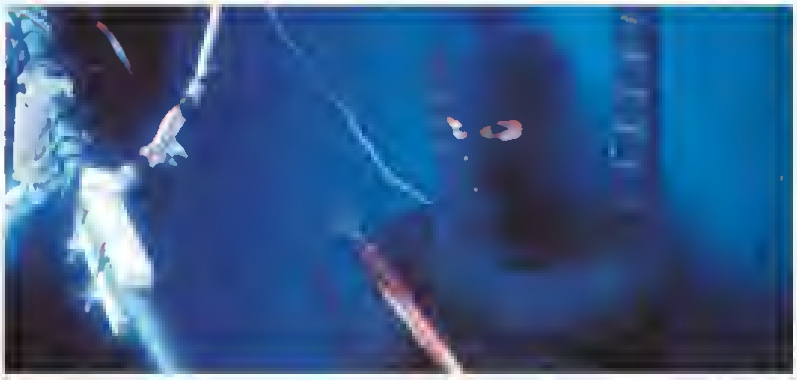
The film opens with a childhood game gone tragically awry when little Robin Hammond falls to her death from a top-floor window of an abandoned, dilapidated convent. Flash forward six years and a masked killer takes to the high school prom, seeking retribution on the group of now-grown teens he deems responsible for Robin's death.

Prom Night contains several of the archetypal trappings that would become a staple of the slasher phenomenon: dark and isolated locations, various red-herrings, fervent young people who embark on a night of hedonistic celebration and a merciless killer who dispatches them one by one. It's very much a product of its time and place, and this holds true behind the camera, as well. Like so many of the films that typify Canada's early-'80s genre explosion, *Prom Night* was a product of government tax incentives.

"It was the time of the tax shelter," recalls Lynch, "where you invested your money in a film and could have a 100 percent write-off. So anything that seemed reasonable, that people were behind, generally found financing. By '79, it was a great time to be making films in Toronto because you would go over to the Four Seasons Hotel or the Courtyard Cafe and it would be packed with stars and wannabe producers, and there was a real excitement about the business."

Prom Night was born out of Lynch's desire to break into commercial filmmaking. His previous two features, *The Hard Part Begins* (1973) and *Blood & Guts* (1978), were small independents that, although critically acclaimed, failed to make an impact at the box office. Figuring the lucrative horror genre was the most surefire way to the big time, he came up with a concept to pitch around to producers.

"I decided to work on an idea called *Don't See the Doc*



Vintage *TV Guide* ad



tor," says Lynch. "I had done a poster for it because I had originally been in advertising, and back in the '70s there were several producers that would make posters for their films and take them to the studios, and the studios would green-light the picture on the basis of the poster. I knew a guy [producer/director Charles B. Pierce] who had done this for *The Legend of Boggy Creek* and *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*."

Lynch approached Irwin Yablans, who had been an executive producer on *Halloween*, with his *Don't See the Doctor* idea, but Yablans was unimpressed.

"He said, 'No, no, no, doctors are grotesque,'" recalls Lynch. "'People don't want to see that. We've had very good success with *Halloween* – how about another holiday?' he said. And I asked, 'You mean like Thanksgiving and cannibalism?' And he said, 'No, that's distasteful! Think of some holiday and get back to me.'"

Lynch left, and, as he was driving back to Los Angeles, passed a billboard for After Six Formals, advertising formal wear for prom night. "I thought, now, there's a kind of event for kids," he remembers. "And 'Prom' and 'Night' sound nice together – pleasant but horrific at the same time."

After unsuccessfully trying to reach Yablans, Lynch ran into legendary Canadian producer Peter Simpson at a filmmakers' function. Simpson agreed to produce the film through his company Simcom, and had William Gray, who had previously penned *The Changeling* (1980), write the script. *Prom Night* would be shot in Toronto in August and September of 1979 for approximately $1.6 million.

Leslie Nielsen – who at the time was finding renewed success as a comedic actor in *Airplane!* (1980) – was cast in a supporting role, but the big draw, of course, wound up being budding scream queen Jamie Lee Curtis. The then-21-year-old, fresh off roles in *Halloween* and *The Fog*, stars as *Prom Night*'s protagonist Kim Hammond – continuing her streak of late '70s and early '80s horror roles. Surprisingly, neither Lynch nor Simpson initially saw Curtis as being suitable for the material.

"I didn't want her originally," says Lynch. "I wanted a girl who had done TV movies [specifically *The Brady Bunch*'s Eve Plumb, who was trying to branch out into dramatic roles]. But Jamie's manager came in with Jamie and she really fought to get *Prom Night*. I'm not quite sure why, but she wanted it. In those days, even though *Halloween* was a huge success, it didn't lead to anything. Today it would, but in those days, she was just another actress and she was in a B-movie and life went on."

After *Prom Night* was shot, distributor Avco Embassy insisted that Lynch punch up the pacing of the film and capitalize more on the success of *Halloween* by adding in scenes of the search for an escaped, violent mental patient.

"My intention was to do a version of *Psycho*, not of anything else," the director points out. "The two films I quite liked were *Psycho* and *Halloween*. And I came from *Psycho*, where you built up slowly to the big end, but Avco Embassy thought it needed some more pizzazz in the opening. So I went back and re-shot for three days on the psycho-

on-the-loose idea."

Featuring the tagline "If you're not back by midnight... you won't be coming home!" *Prom Night* would go on to become one of the biggest grossing Canadian films of 1980, earning close to $15 million in the US and getting nominated for two Genie Awards.

"I thought that the concept would do well, based on what was happening at the time with things like *The Town That Dreaded Sundown* and *Halloween*," says Lynch. "But I didn't think that it would do as well as it did. What pushed it over the edge – and what I think was at least 70 percent of the success for that film – was Jamie Lee Curtis, because she had just done *Halloween* and was a genuine star to that audience."

After Lynch's movie, Curtis went on to make another Canadian slasher, *Terror Train* (also released in 1980) – which, because of *Prom Night*'s success, was also offered to Lynch. He turned it down, feeling that the premise of a slasher movie set on a train didn't make much sense. (*Terror Train* was instead directed by Roger Spottiswoode, who went on to a career helming Hollywood action films such as *Shoot to Kill*, *Air America* and the James Bond franchise entry *Tomorrow Never Dies*.)

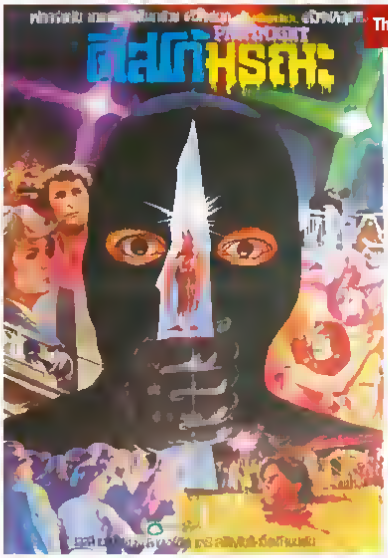
"My theory was that you had to have a common ground," says Lynch. "The high school was a common ground. But kids don't take trains. It's kind of phony."

Prom Night's success resulted in three sequels (see p 56), albeit in name only, kickstarting one of Canada's most enduring horror franchises. But Lynch had no involvement with any of them, either.

"I wasn't much interested, because they weren't anything that made any sense to me," he says. [Warning: spoilers ahead!] "Basically, what happened to Jamie Lee at the end of that film was, they would put her in a mental institution for a long time, as would happen to anybody. You've killed your own brother, who killed a bunch of your friends. You might kind of have a nervous breakdown. I didn't see any sequel. So when Peter [Simpson] came back with *Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night II*, I thought, 'What's the point?' It really didn't do anything for me."

After *Prom Night*, Lynch made several other films, including 1982's *Humongous* (also written by Gray, see p 57) and the 1986 TV movie *Mania*. He then moved on to a prolific career as a television series director, working on *Dark Shadows*, *The Revival*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Poltergeist: The Legacy* and later incarnations of *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*.

Surprised at the endurance of the slasher subgenre (which includes numerous remakes and reboots, among them the much-despised 2008 version of *Prom Night*), Lynch acknowledges that the climate has changed dramatically since the heyday of pitching an entire horror movie based on the strength of a poster alone. "The reason they were so prolific was because they were made for very little money," he explains. "Now the studios themselves pump a fortune into them," he adds, laughing.



Thai poster



US lobby card

Although *Prom Night* is basically one of the better crafted, more interestingly shot and well-edited suspense yarns to come out of the Grisly White North, it hasn't aged quite as well as other entries in the slasher canon. Featuring an unabashed late-'70s sensibility, notably the polyester fashions, infamous disco score (by prolific Canadian composer Paul Zaza, see p 66) and retro dance moves, the film doesn't hold up as well for younger audiences of today. Of course, for others, those are the reasons why it remains a cult classic.

Lynch remains surprisingly upfront about the little maple slasher that could.

"Once you start examining this, you see that nothing is fresh, it's just a different take on something that's already been established," he says. "And there's nothing wrong with that if the take is interesting."

THE HORRORS OF HAMILTON HIGH

CANADA'S MOST FAMOUS SLASHER FLICK SPAWNED THREE SEQUELS

HELLO MARY LOU: PROM NIGHT II (1987)

STARRING MICHAEL ironside, WENDY LYON AND JUSTIN LOUIS
DIRECTED BY BRUCE PITTMAN

Mary Lou Maloney (Lisa Schrage) is about to become Hamilton High's 1957 prom queen when her boyfriend, **Bill**, catches her with another guy. Bill decides to get back at her by throwing a stink bomb on stage while she's accepting her tiara, but a spark ignites Mary Lou's dress, and the newly crowned prom queen is burned alive as her horrified classmates look on. Thirty years later, role-model student Vicki Carpenter (Wendy Lyon) accidentally unleashes Mary Lou's vengeful spirit when she opens an old trunk that's been tucked away in the school's prop room.



If it weren't for the title, *Hello Mary Lou* would be unrecognizable as a *Prom Night* sequel. While the original is a fairly straightforward slasher flick, this supernatural installment features surreal, effects-heavy sequences that would be right at home on Elm Street, including a liquefied chalkboard and a rocking horse that comes to life.

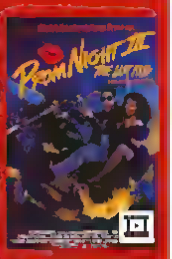


Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night II

PROM NIGHT III: THE LAST KISS (1989)

STARRING TIM CONLON, CYNDY PRESTON AND COURTNEY TAYLOR
DIRECTED BY BEN OLIVER AND PETER SIMPSON

The tongue-in-cheek humour of *Hello Mary Lou* gives way to full-blown comedy in this third entry. The malevolent spirit of Mary Lou (now played by Courtney Taylor) escapes from purgatory and returns to haunt the halls of Hamilton High, where she kills a janitor before crushing on upperclassman Alex Grey (Tim Conlon). Smitten with the handsome young man, Mary Lou uses her feminine wiles to seduce him, and later helps the medical-school hopeful improve his mediocre grades by killing off mean-spirited teachers, unpleasant guidance counselors and egotistical students. Gory and hilarious, *The Last Kiss* is a surprisingly entertaining flick.



PROM NIGHT IV: DELIVER US FROM EVIL (1992)

STARRING NIKKI DE BOER, ALDEN KANE AND JOY TANNER
DIRECTED BY CLAY BORRIS

This truly insipid final entry starts off at Hamilton High's 1957 prom, presumably before Mary Lou is burnt to a crisp. Lisa (Krista Bulmer) and Brad (Phil Morrison) ditch the event to make out in Brad's car, only to be murdered by a young priest, Father Jonas (James Carver), who has taken it upon himself to save "all the sluts and whores" by killing them. His fellow clergymen deem Jonas to be possessed, and lock him away in a church basement. In 1991, Megan (Nikki de Boer) and her friends decide to forgo their prom-night celebrations and head up to a mansion in the woods. Unfortunately for the kids, the house was once Father Jonas' seminary, and the murderous priest escapes his captors and returns to his old stomping grounds to resume his mission.



HUMONGOUS (1982)

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PAUL LYNCH

FOLLOWING 1980'S *PROM NIGHT*, DIRECTOR PAUL LYNCH WOULD GO ON TO HELM ANOTHER HORROR FLICK: the lesser-known *Humongous* (1982). Working with *Prom Night* screenwriter William Gray, Lynch approached distributor Avco Embassy Pictures (which would be renamed Embassy Pictures in 1982) with the concept for *Humongous*.

"We had talked with Avco Embassy and said, 'This is the kind of film we would like to do,' " recalls Lynch. "So we put together *Humongous* and we pitched it to them. And they hemmed and hawed, until finally they said yes. They needed a [producing] partner in Canada. Peter [Simpson] wasn't interested, he had gone on to do bigger-budget films like *Melanie*. So, I was introduced to Tony Kramreither, and he was interested in doing it. We ended up making it in the summer of '81."



The movie begins with a pre-credit sequence set on Labour Day weekend of 1946. A party is taking place at the home of the wealthy Parsons family. Daughter Ida has gone outside where she is accosted and raped by a drunken guest. Hearing her screams, her dogs jump from their fenced enclosure and savagely attack her assailant.

Flash forward 36 years, and Eric (David Wallace), his brother Nick (John Wildman) and sister Carla (Janit Baldwin) are taking their father's yacht out for a cruise, with the brothers' girlfriends, Sandy (Janet Julian) and Donna (Joy Boushel) coming along. When night approaches, they find themselves stuck in thick fog, but manage to rescue a stranded boater who tells them they're approaching an island populated only by a mysterious old woman (Ida Parsons) and her dogs – referred to appropriately enough as "Dog Island." Later, a fire aboard the boat forces everyone to jump overboard. Seeking refuge on the island, the six soon find themselves the target of a large, mutated man who has been catching and eating the area's dog population, but has now turned his sights to the newly arrived humans.

Humongous has long been maligned due to murky, excessively dark VHS transfers that made it difficult to see many sequences in the movie (ironically, the film's theatrical trailer featured much brighter photography). A 2011 DVD from Scorpion Releasing finally rewarded fans with a clearer, brighter picture.

"When I saw it in screenings, you could see everything," asserts Lynch. "But, when they transferred it [to VHS] – and I remember I wasn't there when the transfer was done – it wasn't balanced properly. But in a movie theatre, it looked pretty great."

Though it did not go on to become a box office hit like *Prom Night*, Lynch is still fond of *Humongous*.

"It certainly wasn't received as well as *Prom Night* was, by any means, and I think that [Embassy] was quite disappointed in it. [But] I still like the picture very much today."



1981

GHOSTKEEPER

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JAMES MAKICHUK

CANUCK FILMS OFTEN DISPLAY A TALENT FOR SHOWCASING THE COUNTRY'S BLUSTERY WINTERS AND VAST, varied landscapes. Whether it's dense wilderness of snow-covered trees or barren stretches of blinding white prairie, our inhospitable weather and cold snowy terrain has been put to good use in such home-grown horror pics as *Cannibal Girls* (1973), *Deranged* (1974) and an obscure Alberta-shot wendigo flick from 1981 called *Ghostkeeper*.

Vacationing in the Rockies, Jenny (Riva Spier), her boyfriend Marty (Murray Ord) and her friend Chrissy (Sheri McFadden) are out for a day of snowmobiling when an accident prompts them to seek refuge at a nearby lodge during a blizzard. Though seemingly abandoned, the creepy building turns out to be inhabited by a strange old woman (Georgie Collins) and her son. The apparent caretaker of the lodge, the woman grudgingly allows the three to stay the night. However, the travellers get more than they bargained for when one of them is attacked, taken down to the cellar and then carried off by a deformed man. Add in a sabotaged snowmobile, one of the travellers losing sanity, plus a Final Girl, and you've got yourself a snowy slasher hybrid.



Ghostkeeper departs from straight-up slashers of the time in that it attempts to dispense with many of the key subgenre elements – such as teenaged victims and a masked killer – in favour of a more supernatural-styled storyline involving the flesh-eating wendigo. The incredibly creepy score by prolific composer Paul Zaza adds much to the proceedings, as does John Holbrook's nature cinematography of snow-capped mountains, icy streams and patches of desolate woodlands.

Jim Makichuk recalls making his atmospheric, slow-burning wendigo flick.

Can you briefly tell me a bit about your career prior to Ghostkeeper?

I started in television in Windsor, Ontario and worked across the country at a half dozen TV stations all the way to Vancouver. I started as an editor and then [as a] news cameraman, news writer, and a writer and

producer of commercials. In addition, I worked with [director/producer] Phil Borsos [*The Grey Fox*], we made two award-winning shorts, *Cadillac* and *Cooperage*, which won a Genie and was a finalist in the 1976 Academy Awards. I finally left TV in Calgary in 1979 and wrote [and] directed *Ghostkeeper*, which was produced by my company, Badland Pictures.

What made you want to go with horror for your first feature film?
We chose a horror film mostly because they were extremely popular and relatively easy to sell. Besides that, I was a big fan of John Carpenter, as well as 1950s horror films.

With* Ghostkeeper, *I understand you started out with the location – the old hotel on Lake Louise – and then kind of fashioned the story around that.
As I was beginning to build a story, my friend Doug MacLeod knew the son of the owner of the Deer Lodge hotel, which sits a little way off from the famous Chateau Lake Louise and is rarely noticed by tourists – sort of a little sister to the big one. We learned that the hotel was closed in winter, so we arranged to use it for a very reasonable price.

What prompted you to think of the legend of the wendigo as the basis of the film?
We knew of the wendigo from the book [*Indian Legends of Canada*] that we actually used in the movie, and realized this could be a new type of creature that nobody had really seen in movies. Doug had known someone whose last name was "Ghostkeeper," and we took that as a title. For our wendigo, we had a friend who was very tall undergo some extensive make-up [to become] the creature.

In the opening credits of the film there's also a caption that mentions the wendigo and its basis in Native Indian folklore. Was it always your intention to try and point out the creature's origins in Native Canadian folklore?
As with most myths, there were different versions of the wendigo but most included the fact that they ate human flesh, and we felt that was something we could work with. My intention was also to put as many Canadian references into the movie as we could – that we were not substituting Canada for a US location. We had originally planned on a more ambitious script with more of the wendigo, but we experienced money problems and the budget was suddenly slashed.



Director Jim Makichuk (left) with John MacMillan in the wendigo costume

"MY INTENTION WAS TO PUT AS MANY CANADIAN REFERENCES INTO THE MOVIE AS WE COULD."
- JIM MAKICHUK

Besides those financial challenges, can you recall any difficulties while making the film?
The only difficulty was probably the cold, both inside and outside the hotel. We had to be careful to not move the camera from warm heaters to sudden cold, as the lenses would fog up and we'd have to wait till they "unfogged." One of the drawbacks was that there was no heat in the hotel, so we used a variety of heaters including big torpedo-shaped heaters that blasted heat into the hallways and rooms. We had to turn off the heaters when we filmed, and the coldness returned quickly. A lot of the crew singed and burned their ski clothes, which they wore even inside, and used duct tape to cover the tears.

Ghostkeeper *appears to have been pretty popular on home video. How successful was it when it was first released to cinemas?*
Ghostkeeper did very well in the US on VHS, and there were a few theatrical releases, mostly in foreign markets. It also did well in Great Britain, Mexico and Germany.

Would you like to return to the horror genre again at some point?
I have been asked to make a sequel to *Ghostkeeper* and am seriously considering it. I found it entertaining to watch an audience get scared and thrilled by horror/suspense films, although I do not like brutal and explicit horror material, as in the *Saw* films.


MY
BLOODY
VALENTINE

(1981)

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR GEORGE MIHALKA AND CO-PRODUCER JOHN DUNNING

FOR FANS OF SLASHER MOVIES, THERE'S A LOT TO LOVE ABOUT THE EARLY '80S. With the phenomenal success of *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, everyone wanted a piece of the blood pie and the result was an influx of small, independent companies producing scores of low-budget – often holiday-themed – slice-and-dice films, many released by major studios. In the wake of *Friday*'s 1980 premiere, cinemagoers were treated to numerous kill-fests, including the Canuck tax-shelter entries *Prom Night*, *Terror Train*, *Curtains* and *Happy Birthday to Me*. But holding a particularly special place in the hearts of many slasher fans, is the 1981 Canadian cult classic *My Bloody Valentine*.



It is February 14th, 1960 and everyone in the small coal-mining community of Valentine Bluffs is at the local Valentine's Day dance. Everyone, that is, except five miners trapped beneath the rubble after a methane-triggered mine explosion. The result of two negligent mine supervisors who left their posts early to get to the celebration, the explosion takes the lives of four men who are buried in the debris. The one man found alive – Harry Warden – survived by eating the flesh of his co-workers.

After a stay in the local mental hospital, the unhinged Warden, sporting a miner's uniform, mask and pickaxe, returns to the town exactly one year later, on February 14th, to exact revenge against the two men responsible for the explosion. Cutting out their hearts and stuffing them into candy boxes, he leaves the packages behind along with a note warning the townsfolk never to hold another Valentine's Day dance... or else.

With Harry all but forgotten twenty years later, the residents prepare to renew the tradition. Then a heart-shaped box arrives containing a bloody heart. The dance is cancelled, but some of the miners and their girlfriends throw a party anyway, and that's when the killing starts.

Directed by a then up-and-coming 27-year-old filmmaker named George Mihalka, *My Bloody Valentine* is one of the most effective and atmospheric titles to come from the often-maligned slasher subgenre. It has steadily gained popularity over the years, and what makes it stand out is that it reworks many of the slasher clichés. Instead of fresh-faced teens, a middle-class suburban setting and brainless dialogue, *MBV* features working-class adults with real-life problems, which adds emotional depth and credibility to the film's ghastlier proceedings.

Additionally, unlike other chillers produced at the



time (especially movies that received government funding through the Canadian Film Development Corporation yet tried to pass themselves off as American productions), *My Bloody Valentine* has a strong regional feel to it. Filmed in Nova Scotia in the town of Sydney Mines, it's perhaps the only shocker where Moosehead beer flows so freely and there are more Cape Breton accents than you can shake a cod at.

Add to that a completely original setting (a gloomy, claustrophobic coal mine that's almost a character itself), moody photography, respectable performances, a creepy score (courtesy of veteran composer Paul Zaza: *Curtains*, the *Prom Night* series) and some truly inventive kills. One victim has her heart ripped out before being stuffed into a clothes dryer and left to bake; another is impaled on a jagged metal shower fixture, essentially turning her into a literal "shower head"; and yet another unfortunate meets a particularly brutal end via nail-gun to the temple. The psycho responsible is one of the most menacing maniacs this side of Haddonfield, dressed in a dark work suit and boots, the killer hefts a huge pickaxe and sports an insect-eyed mask that produces a sinister heavy breathing sound.

My Bloody Valentine's cult status isn't just reserved for diehard slasher audiences, either. Quentin Tarantino has named it his favourite slasher film, and *Entertainment Weekly* once cited it as #17 in a ranking of filmic guilty pleasures, even going as far as to call it "the most criminally underappreciated of the genre." The UK band My Bloody Valentine is also said to have taken its name from the film.

Unfortunately, more deadly than the pickaxe was the scissors of the MPAA. Originally rated X for being too violent and bloody, several minutes of the film's death sequences (with special effects by Ken Diaz and makeup legend Tom Burman) were cut in order for it to receive an R.

The missing footage has been a matter of contention for years. The revelation that producer John Dunning kept the censored footage only spurred on fans, who launched letter-writing campaigns and online petitions to Paramount demanding an uncut version. The lack of gore has often been the reason attributed to *My Bloody Valentine*'s lack of initial success. On a budget of $2.3 million, US box office receipts totaled under $6 million. A 2009 special edition DVD (released right before the 3-D remake hit theatres) included some of the originally excised footage. Mihalka takes us back to the mines to talk about Harry Warden.

Your first movie was a comedy; how did you become involved with* My Bloody Valentine*?

It was total serendipity that I got it. On the strength of that little comedy I made, *Pinball Summer*, which had pretty good commercial success, I was hired by John Dunning to work on a comedy that we were going to shoot. We had a couple of very interesting people that were going to be writing that, one of them being one of the editors of *National Lampoon*. Unfortunately, there was a problem with the script being delivered on time, due to certain health problems of one of the writers. So John said to me, "Look, George, we have a deal to make two pictures with you. So, we'll have to make the second film first." And he told me about the synopsis for a film called *The Secret* – about the secret of this little town called Valentine's Bluffs. And he gave me the

outline of the story, which was written by a guy named Stephen Miller, and he also told me that Paramount was interested in the project, but only if we could have it ready for a February 14th release. And this was sometime in late July or so. We didn't even have a script!

That's an incredibly short amount of time to make something like that happen.

John brought in this fantastic writer from LA named John Beaird and he started working on the script on the strength of the first draft, while the line producer and production designer went out to Nova Scotia to start looking for locations. We knew that the only place we could get coal mines would be in Cape Breton Island. And we knew that quite a few of the coal mines were being decommissioned at the time and figured that it was probably the best place to go. So we ended up in North Sydney in Sydney Mines, and we found this mine, called the Princess Mine, which was about to be converted into a museum. The place looked great, and we went back and explained to Beaird what we saw and what we could and couldn't do with it.

So the script was written with the location in mind?

Yes. In keeping with the limitations and what was and wasn't available to us, Beaird kept writing and we kept prepping and casting the picture, and he wrote the script as we went along. He wrote a first draft of the script and we went out to the mines, along with the mining experts, and they pointed out to us things like, "You're on the wrong side of the track here," or "You need to hold the equipment this way."

It comes off as authentic, and even has a documentary feel to it in some places.

The authenticity of the mines and the situations and environment and the whole idea that the mines were closing and these kids were starting to have no future was real. That was the first time that young people there realized that their future was not going to be the same as that of their parents, where jobs were guaranteed. Those were issues that, along with things like alienation, weren't discussed in a horror film. At the time, we were kind of jokingly calling it "*The Deer Hunter* of horror films," because although that film dealt with people coming back from war, both films dealt with some of the same issues. It had some depth. It wasn't just a plain slasher.

CRUEL CUTS: MY BLOODY VALENTINE PRODUCER JOHN DUNNING SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THE FILM'S 'LOST' FOOTAGE

THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL

When *My Bloody Valentine* was released in 1981, demands by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) sent many a horror film back to editors for snipping. Faced with the possibility of getting the dreaded X rating (and therefore dramatically reduced revenue, as many cinemas wouldn't book an X film), studios were left with little choice but to agree to MPAA cuts to get the required R.

"The MPAA was very upset that a major studio like Paramount was getting into horror," recalls *MBV*'s co-producer, the late John Dunning. "It was okay for the little independents to make horror films, but they were against the major ones doing it. The head of the MPAA, Jack Valenti, was dealing with us personally on the film. First, we were trimming very slightly. Then they kept refusing one cut after another."



The veteran producer (who, with associate André Link, produced a number of classic Canadian genre films including David Cronenberg's *Shivers* and *Rabid*) says he kept the cut footage himself – as Paramount only owned what was in the MPAA-approved version.

"Contrary to rumours, I didn't put [the cuts] in a safe, but in safekeeping in a lab for about ten years. Then I personally brought them home with me and kept them in a cold room all these years."

When *My Bloody Valentine* eventually made its way to home video, Dunning says he contacted Paramount to gauge their interest in releasing it with the restored footage without success. It wasn't until the idea for a sequel arose that the wheels were set in motion for audiences to see the footage in a 2009 DVD release.

"We wrote a script for a sequel called *My Bloody Valentine 2: The Return of the Miner*," says Dunning. "It was going to incorporate the cuts which would be used for dream sequences. We sent the script to Lionsgate and they bought it but decided against the sequel and wanted to remake it instead. Then they went to Paramount and made a deal for the DVD rights. So finally, after all these years, people can see what was cut out of the original film."



Peter Cowper as the killer and Carl Marotte as Dave

My Bloody Valentine ***also differs from a lot of the slasher films of the period in that the cast is not a group of teens – these are working-class adults. It's also more dramatic than many of the others in this subgenre.***

With a lot of those films of that era, and even to an extent now, it's basically cookie-cutter suburban kids. If you took away maybe *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, then most of them are these kids getting killed in a never-ending series of bloodbaths, with the kids being interchangeable. And we tried to break away from that and do something different. For instance, in our film, [main character] TJ had both social and economic humiliation



The film has a very Canadian feel to it, in terms of the Moosehead beer, the Maritime accents and so on – and although you don't see any Canadian flags, it doesn't try to pass itself off as an American production. Was that intentional?

One of the funny things that I've noticed over the years is that a lot of the Canadian things are so minor that unless you're Canadian, many people don't even notice. And we didn't have any Canadian flags because we tried to stay away from all flags in the movie. But when we were doing it, you couldn't mention Canada. In the early '80s, in all the Canadian films, we had to end up sticking in American flags and pretend that we were in America. And that was basically because many Americans wouldn't go and see a movie that's set in Canada. So in the case of *My Bloody Valentine*, we tried to create a fictional place which sort of hinted at the fact that there was a sheriff and not a police officer. But at the same time, we unabashedly stuck in Moosehead beer just to let everyone know.

Did any of the actors actually have those Nova Scotia accents?

Most of them, especially the Toronto actors, were acting to get those accents. We tried to make it work. It was our little subversive way of keeping it Canadian.

What were the challenges of shooting in a mine?

We were working at such a fast pace, under conditions that were unimaginable. The director of photography, Rodney Gibbons, had to work under extreme low-light conditions. In the mine, no lighting fixtures could be more than 25 watts because of the danger of sparking. And in those days film lights were huge. But everything had to be sparkless, so safety lights had to be used. It's a huge credit to Rodney and our chief electrician [that they were] able to do what they did. It was dangerous to shoot in, even though it was being turned into a museum, it was basically still a coal mine and there was a

danger of methane gas buildup. On several occasions the security people there told us, "Everybody out of here!" and we were 900 metres underground. To be able to light the mine, and get the generator and electricity you need and have water dripping everywhere was a problem. And if you look closely, you'll see that white dust all over everything. That's the lime dust, which was there to prevent sparking. And that would get into your lungs and eyes. People couldn't breathe well. And it was getting very cold down there, too, at that time of the year. It was very, very difficult physically, to work in those conditions.

And after all that work, My Bloody Valentine ended up a victim of the MPAA, losing several minutes of your cut.

I should make it clear, first of all, that it wasn't Paramount that asked for the cuts. It was the ratings board, the MPAA in the United States, which felt that the film was much too graphic in its portrayal of the deaths than was acceptable at the time. Whenever I do violence, I don't want to do something that looks beautiful, like beauty shots in some commercial. I wanted to make the violence something that was terrifying, realistic, something that really hurts. Which made it very effective. And we were doing state-of-the-art special effects which nobody was really doing back then – mechanical and prosthetic real-time effects that were very complicated. But we were very successful, so much so that we became the victims of our own success, in the eyes of the MPAA and so on. [And] we have to remember that in December of that year, in 1980, John Lennon got shot.

I remember seeing it on the covers of newspapers when I was a kid.

Well, everybody was very upset, and there was a major backlash against violence because of that. It became very popular all of a sudden to disdain violence. It became trendy and everyone in the United States rode up on a moral high horse at that time.

Especially the film critics, right?

Especially the film critics. And I think the MPAA was frightened that this was going to cause a backlash. Apart from the makeup effects, we were also doing sound effects that nobody else was doing. If you listen to that film carefully, the sound effects were just as horrifying as the images. Surprisingly, in a couple of situations, even after we had cut out the offending material, the sound effects were so strong that they kept asking for more cuts. So, all of this conspired to make us a bigger target. We were all very disappointed because we had all worked extremely hard at trying to make this very strong film. Basically we died the death of a thousand cuts.



Lori Hallier as Sarah and Paul Kelman as T.J.

Do you consider the restored version a faithful director's cut?

No, it could never be. Because we could only add the missing footage into the edit. The film and the scenes were edited one way, and then when things got taken out, the scenes had to be re-edited and we had to go to something else, like a reaction shot. So several of those shots are now lost and gone for good. And don't forget that, over the years, film stock – especially the untreated negative – tends to deteriorate. So the original version is lost because, of course, back then things weren't digital and you couldn't keep different stages of a cut.

Some of the restored scenes are particularly graphic. Do you have a favourite one, and why?

The shower impaling is probably my favourite, for many reasons. Probably because the setup to that was so powerful, with the miner's clothes coming down from the ceiling in the changing room, which by the way was the real change room and showers that the miners used. So, the whole setup to create that absolute nightmare panic of the girl was already there. That particular scene was something that I came up with one day when they were showing me around. They showed me this thing, when accidentally one of those heavy black uniforms with the helmet attached to it came tumbling down from the ceiling above me, scaring the living daylights out of me!



PAUL ZAZA

IF YOU'RE A FAN OF CANADIAN HORROR CINEMA, CHANCES ARE YOU'VE COME ACROSS THE NAME PAUL ZAZA [illegible] Canada's most prolific film composers, his scores have appeared in such Canuck chillers as *Prom Night* and its three sequels, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Ghostkeeper*, *American Nightmare*, *Curtains* and *The Dark*.

Born in Toronto in 1952, Zaza began studying piano at the age of four and graduated from the Royal Conservatory of Music (previously known as the Toronto Conservatory of Music) in 1970. An avid rock fan, the teenaged Zaza played bass in a Toronto production of the hit musical *Hair*, and was subsequently given the opportunity to tour as bass player with the superstar group The 5th Dimension in the early '70s. Setting up his own recording studio in 1972, Zaza expanded into television and film scoring a few years later, and to date has close to 200 television and movie credits to his name. He won a Genie Award for his lush score for the horror-laced Sherlock Holmes/Jack the Ripper thriller *Murder By Decree*, and is the recipient of fourteen SOCAN (Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada) awards.

You started composing film scores in the late 1970s. Tell me about working as a composer in the Canadian film industry at that time.

You know, you could go on and talk for days about each film, and they all have their own unique stories. No two films went down the same way. But the one thing they all had in common, at least in terms of the Canadian tax shelter era, was the films were made with tax shelter money and they were not inspired by art's sake. They were made as a way for doctors, lawyers and dentists to be in the movie business and have some fun instead of paying Revenue Canada. This way, they got to come to the screenings and meet the stars, go to the parties, see their names up on the big screen and tell everybody "This is my movie!" [Laughs] We were all happy because we got work. And the government was happy because the money that was used to make these films went back into the economy to hire cabs, hotels, composers and mixers, and was recirculated in the economy. And that's a good thing. Every time a film was shot, they'd need food for eighty people. They'd hire these catering companies to cook for us all, and put us up in hotels if we were out of town. It really was a booming, bustling era.

Your first horror film score was for* Prom Night. *You wrote all the disco songs for that film, correct?

Yeah, I did them all in my studio in a week. There was not much room for error.

Some of those songs appear to be inspired by the disco hits of the day. For instance, was the track "Love Me Till I Die" influenced by Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive"?

Yes. The way these songs came about was that when [producer] Peter Simpson – who was a very, very stubborn person – went in and shot the dancing scenes with Jamie Lee Curtis and everybody else, he used Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," Patrick Hernandez's big hit at the time, "Born To Be Alive" and Gino Soccio's "Dancer." He just brought the records in and had them shoot to those songs. In all his naivety, he thought, "Well, I'll just make a deal with the record companies and buy the rights and we'll put [the songs] in." So when Gloria Gaynor's legal affairs people

got on the phone they wanted $200,000 for the rights to use the song, Peter went bananas and said, "We don't have that much to shoot the scene Tell them to go to hell!" Since we couldn't use "I Will Survive," I thought about it and I called it "Love Me Till I Die " Of course, that kind of played into it because [the characters] were going to die very soon I had about five or six days to do all these – to dream up the tunes, write them, record them, produce them and cut them into the film.



One of the big problems, and I'll never forget this because it was a classic, classic answer from Peter: I said, "Peter, the problem is that you've contacted a lot of these publishers and told them that you've got their songs in your movie They're going to be looking for them now. And if I come out with a knock-off that's too close, there could be lawsuits." I asked him, "How close do you want me to come?" And his answer was, "I want you to come close enough that we get sued, but not so close that they win."

Are you happy with the end results?

No I listen to them today and I think they could have been so much better You know, it's like anything that you look back on from the past. You look at them and judge them on the merit of what they are But you forget about all the surrounding circumstances, like having this insane producer breathing down my neck, telling me to get sued, but that they can't win Calling me and telling me that he doesn't like this song, he doesn't think it's going to work All that endured are the six songs, and I listen to them today and think, "They could have been so much better."

How did you become attached to Curtains?

Curtains was part of a three-picture deal that I did with Peter Simpson's company. The three pictures were *Prom Night*, *Melanie* and *Curtains* And it was a strange package, because *Prom Night* and *Curtains* were these horror films, and *Melanie* was anything but It was a little romantic thing.

Curtains was the third film of that package, and it was taking forever to get finished It was so bad that every time they screened it, they wound up cutting more and more of it out It wasn't scary and it wasn't compelling in any way. They knew they had a problem, and they just kept re-shooting and re-editing. Contractually, I had agreed to the three-picture deal, so I had to stay with it. It took a year to get this thing finished I was getting called to do other pictures, and going into pre-production on other films *Ghostkeeper* was one of them. And I actually didn't start on *Ghostkeeper* until we finally did finish *Curtains*

How did you come aboard My Bloody Valentine?

[Producers John Dunning and André Link] knew who I was from all these other films. And they called me up – and this was a bit of a stretch, because this was a Montreal company, and Montrealers and Torontonians didn't actually get along all that well back then I don't know why, because there are French-Canadian composers, but for some reason they called in from Toronto And every time I had to go for a meeting, I had to jump on a flight in the dead of winter. I remember it, because I'd get off the plane and it was just so cold and so far to get to their offices It was a lot harder doing the picture because everything was done in Montreal – they mixed it in Montreal, and the sound was done there The music was the only component they did in Toronto.

For My Bloody Valentine, you composed a memorable little song that appears at the end of the film.

Oh, yeah "The Ballad of Harry Warden "

How did that piece of music come about?

Well, you know the movie and you know that at the end, [the killer] runs off and yells, "I'll be back," or something to that effect. [The producers] wanted to set it up for a sequel So, we wanted to set up that this was the legend in this little town – that every Valentine's Day, this horror is relived. The town was cursed, and it instilled fear in every man I forget the lyrics I used, but I wrote the song overnight Actually it was something that I kind of took from "The Wreck of the Edmond Fitzgerald" by Gordon Lightfoot, and just changed the concept.

Out of all your horror scores, what do you think you did the best job on?

You know, they're just all so different. *Murder by Decree* is probably the nicest score I've written, period, even though it's not really a horror film.

Looking back, what is your feeling about the work you did for all these tax shelter skeehers?

I'm glad it happened It was a great opportunity I was a fledgling composer and I learned how to do this with these [films] If you made a mistake, it didn't really matter much because these films, in a lot of cases, were a series of mistakes The only difference between Canadian and American films is that when the Americans make mistakes, they've got the money to fix them. And they make just as many mistakes as we do But for us, once the budget was blown, you lived with the mistake



1981

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME

INTERVIEW WITH ACTRESS LESLEH DONALDSON AND CO-PRODUCER JOHN DUNNING

FOR SLASHER FANS, 1981 WAS A MILESTONE YEAR WITH A MULTITUDE OF RELEASES such as *My Bloody Valentine*, *An American Werewolf in London*, *The Burning* and highly anticipated sequels to *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* hitting movie screens. One of the more distinctive entries to emerge from the subgenre was the overshadowed Canadian title *Happy Birthday to Me*. Glossy and sophisticated, yet deliciously trashy and over-the-top at the same time, the Montreal-shot film is an anomaly. With its melodramatic acting and plot overflowing with twists and turns, it feels like a blood-soaked throwback to the thrillers of the '50s and '60s. Imbuing the movie with a classic, stylish feel was late British filmmaker J. Lee Thompson, the Oscar-nominated director behind such highly-regarded cinematic gems as 1961's *The Guns of Navarone* and 1962's *Cape Fear*.



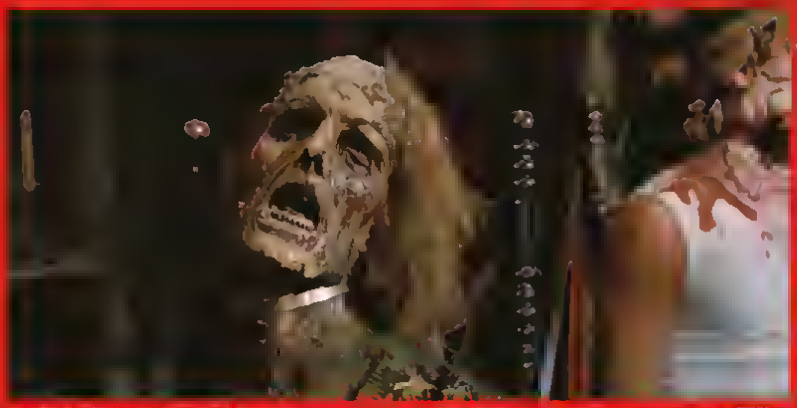
"J. Lee was interested in making a horror film, and he came aboard after he read the script," says the film's producer, the late John Dunning. "The idea behind *Happy Birthday* was to make a thriller that involved people being killed in ingenious ways. And on top of that, there was a back story to it, and also the mystery of who was killing them all, like the [Agatha Christie] story *Ten Little Indians*."

Virginie "Ginny" Wainwright (Melissa Sue Anderson of TV's *Little House on the Prairie*) is a popular high school senior at the prestigious Crawford Academy. As a member of Crawford's "Top Ten," she's part of an exclusive clique made up of the school's wealthiest, most envied students. But as her eighteenth birthday approaches, she suffers recurring blackouts and vivid flashbacks of a freak childhood accident, which claimed the life of her mother and required that Ginny undergo highly experimental brain surgery. Adding to the poor girl's distress is the fact that her friends are falling prey to a calculating, black-gloved killer who's dispatching them in bizarre ways.

Starring alongside Anderson was veteran Hollywood icon Glenn Ford (*3:10 to Yuma*, *Superman*) as Ginny's understanding psychiatrist, Dr. Faraday, who attempts to help her cope with her procedure's after-effects, while genre favourite Lawrence Dane (*Rituals*, *Scanners*) played the young woman's beleaguered father.

Also appearing was Canuck scream queen Lesleh Donaldson (*Deadly Eyes*, *Curtains*) as Bernadette O'Hara, one of Ginny's doomed friends, who meets her demise by having her throat slashed.

"That was hard because it was one of those things that you had to get right on the first go," recalls Donaldson of filming the murder scene. "If you fucked it up, then you had to go and clean it up and do it again. They had the [tubing] going up under my blouse and attached under the actual prosthetic neck. They would turn it on and I had to



...e I w...en I ... my ...ad ...ac... ... e b...o... to come up and squirt out at the right time. So it was a bit nerve-wracking, and the pressure was on to do it right."

Sticking close to the original script for the most part, Thompson decided to shoot a different ending – a thoroughly twisted scenario that also features one of the ghastliest birthday parties ever committed to celluloid. Dunning says they wanted to feature something guaranteed to catch audiences off guard.

"J. Lee and I thought up the ending," admits Dunning on one of *Happy Birthday*'s most memorable and talked-about scenes. "We thought, 'Why not make it a surprise and have a real twist at the end?'"

Featuring the tagline "Six of the most bizarre murders you will ever see," *Happy Birthday to Me* delivered fairly well on that promise with several cringe-inducing sequences that remain offbeat and inventive to this day. One victim is strangled (and mangled) to death when his scarf gets caught in the spokes of his motorcycle wheel, another has his neck and testicles crushed while lifting weights; and of course there's the shish kebab skewer through the mouth – the centrepiece of the film's infamous poster art.

Dunning recalls that Thompson reveled in the movie's gore. "We had trouble controlling him with the stage blood. The camera guy came up to me and said, 'You've got to tell J. Lee to stop with the blood – it's flying all over my camera and I can't get a proper shot.' He was really into it and I had to tell him to calm down."

In additional to the creative murders, the film also featured a graphic – and authentic-looking – brain operation. "If you look at the brain operation, it was [actually] done by a brain surgeon," says Dunning. "They made a figure with a dummy brain, and he sawed through the skull and did his number."

Donaldson recalls a happy shoot, but for some added excitement, both she and co-star Richard Rebiere decided to go for a walk one day in downtown Montreal while wearing their murder makeups, which Donaldson says took two hours to apply.



Melissa Sue Anderson as Virginie and Glenn Ford as Dr. David Faraday

"THE IDEA BEHIND *HAPPY BIRTHDAY* WAS TO MAKE A THRILLER THAT INVOLVED PEOPLE BEING KILLED IN INGENIOUS WAYS."

- JOHN DUNNING

"I remember one lunch hour, Richard turned to me and said, 'Let's go for a walk.' And I said, 'Hell, no. Like this?' And he said, 'Yes. It will be fun.' And we went out, and we were in our makeup, and we started walking up the street and some people would look at us and laugh, [but] because it wasn't Halloween, some were mortified."

Praising Thompson, Dunning says they both just wanted to make a horror film that stood out from the crowd.

"It was a film with character. These people had real weight to them, they weren't just thrown in there because they were going to be killed. And it was a mix of different kinds of films. A pastiche. You got into horror, drama, thriller. I think that's one of the biggest differences between this and the others. I liked it and am proud of it. I did 58 films and it's certainly in my top five favourites."





(1983)

CURTAINS

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR RICHARD CIUPKA AND STARS LYNNE GRIFFIN AND LESLEH DONALDSON

A CREEPY DOLL STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD IN THE RAIN. The shocking discovery of a head floating in a toilet. A sickle-wielding killer in an old hag mask methodically skating across a pond.

Those are just a few of the images burned into the brains of slasher fans who sought out *Curtains*, one of the later releases to come out of the original slasher boom of the late 1970s and early '80s. The 1983 film is arguably one of the most underrated offerings from Canada's golden age of horror cinema. Plagued with production problems that delayed its release for two years, ignored by audiences at the time and disparaged by critics, *Curtains* slowly gained a cult fan base.

The plot of the movie sees well-respected thespian Samantha Sherwood (Samantha Eggar: *The Brood*) purchase the screen rights to a property titled *Audra* – about a former mental patient who seeks revenge against her unfaithful lover – for renowned director Jonathan Stryker (John Vernon: *Dirty Harry*) with the intention of starring in the project. However, when she rehearses a pivotal scene from the movie for Stryker, he doesn't think her performance is believable enough. Determined to gain better insight into the character, Samantha hatches a plan with Stryker to feign madness so she can gain admittance to a psychiatric hospital and conduct research for the role.



The institution begins to take its toll on Samantha, however, and Stryker eventually abandons her there, forging ahead with his plans to make *Audra* with a different lead. He invites six young women – accomplished actress Brooke Parsons (Linda Thorson), comedienne Patti O'Connor (Lynne Griffin), skater Christie Burns (Lesleh Donaldson), dancer Lauran Summers (Anne Ditchburn), musician Tara DeMillo (Sandra Warren) and actress Amanda Teuther (Deborah Burgess) – to his isolated country estate for a weekend audition, during which one of them will be selected for the coveted role. Things become increasingly awkward when Samantha arrives unexpectedly from the sanatorium and is none-too-happy that her part is being given away. Amid all this tension, a killer shows up sporting black gloves, dark clothing and a hideous old hag mask – and ruthlessly dispatches the women one by one.

Perhaps known as much for its problems behind the camera as for the action in front of it, *Curtains* is composed of footage shot by two different people: Belgian-born Canadian director Richard Ciupka and the film's producer, the late Peter Simpson (*Prom Night I* to *IV*). Ciupka – who began his career as a cinematographer and worked on a number of films, including the Oscar-nominated and Genie Award-



John Vernon featured on a Mexican lobby card

"I WAS VERY PLEASED TO GET THE ROLE, BECAUSE I HAD PLAYED SO MANY VICTIMS UP TO THAT POINT, THAT I NEVER LIVED TO THE END OF THE FILM."

winning *Atlantic City* (1980) – originally envisioned the project as a classy, character-driven psychological thriller Simpson, however, wanted a more conventional horror flick full of sex, blood and chase sequences, which led him to edit out portions of Ciupka's footage and shoot new scenes The result is a slightly uneven, but still incredibly effective shocker, praised for such memorable elements as the aforementioned stalk 'n' slash sequence on a frozen pond, composer Paul Zaza's chilling score and its subversive movie poster of the doll emerging from the mouth of a hag mask, which resembles not only parted curtains but also female genitalia

With an estimated budget of $3 7 million, initial filming took place in Toronto and the rural Ontario areas of Muskoka and Sudbury In late 1980 and early '81 (Simpson's contributions would be shot and edited in the months following) Released in the US by independent distribution company Jensen Farley Pictures, Inc., *Curtains* had its theatrical debut in March 1983 and its Canadian premiere in September of 1984, when it was distributed by Norstar Releasing It faltered at the box office and languished for three decades on muddy VHS tapes and bargain-bin DVD compilations until a 2014 reissue from Synapse Films made the movie available to a new generation of fans

There are stories that claim the set of* Curtains *was full of tension between director and producer. Is that true?

Richard Ciupka: To be honest, I've never understood that Peter had a temper, and he didn't mince his words, but I only remember having one argument with him on the set, and it was at the very end of the studio shoot. I actually hardly saw Peter on the shoot He left me to do whatever I wanted, in terms of the art direction and everything. I've also heard these stories and I couldn't believe it I had a great relationship with Peter

I came across an interview with Simpson [on the website terrortrap com] in which he says that you didn't know where to go with the film, and seems to almost imply that he fired you from the project.

RC: No, he never fired me. I can guarantee you that When we were shooting Peter didn't have a full idea of what the movie would look like That happened later after we fin-

ished the skating sequence, and they started putting all this together. He must have gone, "Oh, this is too artsy, this is too psychological. There's not enough blood. There's not enough this, or not enough that."

Lynne Griffin: I had a terrific time on the film. I remember working with Richard and seeing some of the wonderful things he wanted to do. I particularly loved the scene at the dinner table where he had the camera on a track that circled all around the table. I never noticed any animosity between them.

Leslah Donaldson: I think it was all very amicable. I just think that they had two very different visions of what kind of movie they wanted to make. Richard wanted it to be very artistic, giallo-like and European, and Peter wanted the slasher formula. He had just done *Prom Night* and knew that was the formula that everybody wanted to see. They want to see someone stalking women or people in an isolated place, and [see them] be slashed. I think Richard wanted a more artistic, psychological feel – and it's there – but, Peter wanted a bit more gore.

RC: But it's ironic because when he hired me for the film, it was because of that, you know? He didn't want to have a cheap-looking B-movie, he wanted a very classy, well-shot horror movie.

How much of the film did you actually direct then, if he shot additional footage?

RC: Basically, the opening nineteen minutes I have nothing to do with. And the last eleven minutes, which is that whole prop house chase scene, isn't mine, either. If you watch it, it's totally different in the way it's lit. I mean, the whole thing about Samantha Eggar walking into the mad-house and being interned there, that was never in there at all. But Peter was very good at that; he was always changing things.

What do you remember about the casting process?

LG: At the time, I was much more of a stage actress and I was working at Stratford doing Shakespeare. I probably put myself down on tape for audition. And I was very pleased to get the role, because I had played so many victims up to that point, that I never lived to the end of the film. [I was in], and I was always one of the first to get knocked off.

The film really does have a great cast, including John Vernon and Samantha Eggar.

RC: John Vernon I knew – not well – but I had worked with him twice before. I worked with him on a film called *Angela* [1978] with Sophia Loren and John Huston [where] I was the camera operator. We got along really well, and he was a very sweet guy.



Actress Lynne Griffin poses outside a cinema showing *Curtains*

I read that prior to Vernon coming aboard, you had considered Klaus Kinski for the role of Stryker. Is that true?

RC: Yes, that's true. Kinski was doing all those Werner Herzog movies and he was this crazy actor, but the quality of his presence was stunning. Just his look, and his eyes. I remember I was arguing that it would add a plus to the whole thing, because there was a possibility that maybe he could be the killer. But then Peter said, 'Well, nobody knows about Kinski except you, because you watch all these European movies, but American audiences [don't].'"

How was it working with Samantha Eggar? She gave a really great performance.

RC: I was really petrified by her, to be honest with you. She looked terrific but she hardly spoke, she hardly said anything. She was a big-time actress and I was very intimidated by her but there was never a problem and she was very good with everything.

LG: We all got along well. I mean, Samantha was a bit cool to us, but that was the nature of her role as well. The rest of us, we were sort of young at the time, and she was about a decade older and from a very different background [than] the rest of us. I was in awe of her because

The Collector [1965] had been one of my favourite films, and I knew very well how brilliant she had been in that film with Terence Stamp. I was in awe of John Vernon as well.

Originally, French-Canadian singer and actress Celine Lomez appeared in the film, but she was replaced by Linda Thorson. Why?

RC: I knew Celine from Montreal from doing some things there so I [had] worked with her. When I came onto the film, Peter was already talking about Celine because he thought she was a very attractive woman, which she was but when we started shooting, we saw that she wasn't very good. Her accent was very strong. Eventually, after seeing the rushes Peter – being as tactful as he was – just fired her.

Tell me a bit about shooting the film.

RC: We shot from the end of October or beginning of November and I had to come home for Christmas, because I had just gotten married and my wife wanted to kill me. [Laughs] I remember I had left Toronto – and I had seen the first half hour of the film finished and I really liked what I saw. And Peter said, "Go and enjoy Christmas." Then we came back on the shoot for the skating scene in January, and because there was no more snow in Toronto, we were chasing the cold and the snow [north]. I was there with a smaller crew and I did my own photography and operated the camera. We shot that scene and it went really well. I came back to Toronto and then went to Montreal because I had a lot of commercials to shoot. Peter said, "I will call you, and you'll come up to Toronto and come and see the editing." But that never happened. From that day on, after I came back from that shoot in Northern Ontario doing the skating scene, I never heard back from him.

LG: My favourite scene to play was the one on the staircase with John Vernon. I think it was definitely Richard's idea that I chase him up the staircase and cut him off, which I thought was particularly powerful. It was a really nice, dramatic scene. And to do that stand-up comedy scene at Yuk Yuk's was also very challenging. I seem to remember them saying, "Come up with a routine." And I was terrified, because we actually filmed it in front of a live audience.

LD: I fell down and hit my chin on the ice and got a bruise [during the ice skating sequence]. It was embarrassing, you know. You train and train for it and everything was set and then you get on the pond and – boom! – you go down. Luckily the double they had, we were physically so much alike. She's also the hag that skates across the ice. Peter was there, as I remember, falling on the ice and tripping behind him and [production manager] Gerry Arbeid. By the time I went on the pond the ice was very bumpy and very treacherous, and not conducive to figure skating.

That scene is one of the most memorable and chilling sequences from the film.

LD: I think it's all the imagery of the sickle, the hag mask and daylight on the ice. It was so rarely done that way – nobody really got killed during the day, except for in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

RC: It remember it was sunny and Peter said, "No, you can't do this," and I said, "No, no, it's going to be great." He was very happy at the end because it goes against the grain. I think, visually, it's one of the most disturbing scenes in the film. I remember we shot it in two days, and the biggest problem I had was that there wasn't enough ice to get any kind of momentum on skates, you know? It was very jagged ice. It wasn't flat, and the [skating] double had a problem. Most of it I shot in slow-motion, which originally wasn't planned. I did it in slow-motion just to prolong the skating surface, and it turned out really well.

Do you recall any scenes that you shot that ended up being cut out of the film?

RC: There were a lot of scenes of Michael Wincott. When I finally saw it, I said, "Where's Michael?" There were also scenes of Samantha Eggar in her bedroom. And a lot of the night-time exteriors – I remember that we shot day-for-night – of the scenes outside the mansion with Michael. They didn't reshoot, they shot new stuff. They went in a different direction.

LD: There was one scene from the re-shoot that never got used, thankfully, because it was so ridiculous. They were trying to justify why my character would sleep with John Vernon. So they shot a flashback scene where I was breaking up with my professor in college, who was dumping me. [My character] had this history of chasing down older men, I guess.

LG: It's interesting because we shot two different endings. I remember shooting [the original] in a little theatre somewhere in Toronto, where all the dead bodies were there and I was doing my stand-up routine in front of them all. But then we came back and filmed me in the mental hospital, doing the routine in front of the patients – which was the way they chose to go for the ending.

Who filmed the revised ending?

LG: I have a feeling it was Peter Simpson. He also filmed the scene where I go at Samantha in the kitchen with the knife at the end. That wasn't in the original.

Was the creepy doll always in the script?

RC: Yes, but originally it wasn't the same kind of doll as you see in the film. The first doll wasn't as rigid, it was a softer type of doll. The whole car scene when the car stops in the middle of the road – you see, that's another thing.

Originally, it wasn't a dream, [Peter] made it a dream sequence. But it wasn't one in the original script.

Really?

RC: Peter rearranged stuff – just like Michael Wincott going through that big scene that is not in the film, with his snowmobile crashing through the library window. That doll scene was originally not a dream at all. One of the actresses was driving to the mansion and came upon this doll, thinking it was a child standing on the road in the rain. Then she gets close [to it], and it was just this big hook for the audience at the beginning of the movie. And we left it at that. But Peter started playing with the structure so much.

There's a photo showing the film's alternate ending with Lynne Griffin's character standing on a stage with her victims.

RC: The film that Peter released and what I was originally presented with in the script are like two different worlds. Peter really went off and just changed it all. After the skating scene, I had no contact with him. In those days, I was living between Montreal and Los Angeles, while Peter was in Toronto. He didn't have me on his back, I guess, and he did whatever he wanted. He was the producer. And I was a bit naive in that sense, never thinking that he would change things. But you live and learn.

What happened when you finally saw it?

RC: When I watched it, it just blew me away, because for the first nineteen minutes, I said, "What is this?" It was like nothing that had been written or nothing that I had shot. I couldn't believe it. This was almost a year later when they sent me the cassette. They sent it with a letter, asking if could I please sign off on this. I said, 'No, I can't sign this; half of the movie I didn't even shoot or had anything to do with the original script." So, I told [Simpson] "No," and I went off very disillusioned. I couldn't believe a producer could even do that, honestly.

Whose decision was it to use the name "Jonathan Stryker" for the director's credit?

RC: It was Peter's. I just said that I would not put my name on this film. You know, a year or so later when I got the tape [of the finished film], I had spent a lot of time in Los Angeles and I was doing big commercials. So, to be honest, I couldn't care less anymore. I was making way more money than doing drama. But I was disillusioned and it turned me off doing drama, so I just did commercials and opened my own production house.

Are you surprised at the film's cult following?

LD: What Richard accomplished and brought to the film really makes it a cult classic, and makes people gravitate to it. It was beautifully shot, and there was character development. And in my view, it was one of the only films where they spent a lot of time building up to the kills.

RC: You know, when I shot that, I never thought the film would do anything. Peter said that I was too artsy-fancy, but I think that it adds a certain flavour to the film. I guess that between the both of us, we ended up doing something.



Leslie Donaldson as Christie Burns

THE ORIGINAL NIGHTMARE

WHETHER IT'S DUE TO CASTING, LOCATION, EFFECTS, FOOTAGE, BUDGET OR DISCONTENTMENT ON THE PART OF STUDIOS OR PRODUCERS, it's not unusual for films to undergo changes when making the transition from script to screen. But *Curtains* was radically overhauled by producer Peter Simpson, who excised entire scenes, had existing ones re-edited, and later shot and inserted new footage in order to reveal *his* vision for the film, original director Richard Ciupka shares his shooting script in order to contrast and compare the two versions.

Written by Robert Guza, Jr (who also scripted the 1980 Simpson-produced cult hit, *Prom Night*), the original screenplay for *Curtains* begins not with noted actress Samantha Sherwood (Samantha Eggar) admitting herself into a mental institution to prepare for her upcoming role as the insane Audra, but rather with a miniature stage populated with nine dolls, which we later learn represent director Jonathan Stryker (John Vernon), Samantha, an 18-year-old caretaker named Matthew (Michael Wincott), and the six starlets: Amanda, Tara, Brooke, Christie, Patti and Parisian model Angelique (who is changed to dancer Laurian for the film). The sequence then introduces each of the characters before they arrive for Stryker's weekend casting call.

Amanda is dispatched on the way to the audition, but the sequence is not depicted as a dream, as it is in the film. Once at the snow-covered estate – which is described as a lodge belonging to Samantha rather than the director – the women are subjected to mind games not only by the Svengali-like Stryker, but also by the aging, eccentric Samantha, who shows an unusual interest in Angelique. It is revealed in the script that Samantha and Stryker were once lovers – hinted at in the film, but never made explicit – and there is dialogue between them pertaining to having a dead child. As in the film, Stryker sleeps with some of the acting hopefuls, but unlike the movie, it's more than hinted at that Samantha is having an intimate relationship with the much younger Matthew.

Among the most striking differences between script and final cut are some of the script's more shocking kill scenes. One victim is skewered on the tip of a ski pole that has been affixed to a chair lift, and is hoisted high into the air; another is riding a snowmobile when she's pursued by the killer (also on a snowmobile) through the woods and smashes – throat-level – into a low-hanging branch. And figure skater Christie is dispatched not by a sickle, but by the blade of a skate, when the hag-masked killer raises a foot to slice her neck. Not only is the young woman's head later found in a toilet (as in the film), but her body is suspended in the shower.

In Guza's original script, the look of the killer's hag mask – grey, wrinkled skin with long, stringy red hair – is likened to that of a banshee, a female supernatural being of Irish folklore, known to wail when someone is about to die. The dialogue contains references to the creatures, and the murders are preceded by the strange wailing of something seemingly inhuman. The killer even sports what is thought to be the traditional banshee garb: a green dress with grey cloak. In the finished film, the references to banshees are omitted entirely.

The climax of the shooting script leaves Stryker alive, as comedienne/killer Patti props up all the corpses on stage and asks him to pick the best one to play Audra. Stryker then calls the authorities and takes the blame for the deaths.

Despite the elements of horror, Guza – who would go on to long-time writing gigs on such soap operas as *Santa Barbara* and *General Hospital* – manages to infuse his screenplay with a bit of dark humour and more than a touch of melodrama. It's a more literary, self-reflexive story with nastier kills, and a fascinating reminder that filmmakers were becoming more ambitious with the slasher formula as the cycle went on.



Curtains director Richard Ciupka and actress Samantha Eggar



FURTHER VIEWING

PLAGUE A.K.A. THE GEMINI STRAIN (1979)
STARRING DANIEL PILON, KATE REID AND CÉLINE LOMEZ
DIRECTED BY ED HUNT

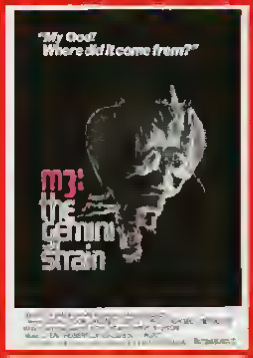
In the Toronto-shot riff on *The Andromeda Strain*, a research assistant at McNaughton Labs defies her superiors and conducts an unsanctioned experiment that leads to the creation of a deadly bacterium. The contagion infects and kills its creator before moving beyond the laboratory walls through the facility's ventilation system. A quarantine is promptly imposed, but a local schoolteacher (Céline Lomez) who unknowingly contracts the disease turns out to be an asymptomatic carrier and spreads the contagion to the general populace as she's pursued by authorities. It's up to scientist Dr. Bill Fuller (Daniel Pilon) to come up with a cure for the plague before it threatens the entire human race.

DEATH SHIP (1980)
STARRING GEORGE KENNEDY, RICHARD CRENNA AND NICK MANCUSO
DIRECTED BY ALVIN RAKOFF

In the dark of night, a large ship rams into a luxury cruise liner, and a small group of passengers and crew manage to escape the sinking vessel in a raft. The survivors come across a dark, hulking ship and decide to board it, not realizing it's the very ship that attacked them. It appears to be deserted, but turns out to harbour gruesome secrets. One passenger who finds and eats a few candies breaks out in large, horrific boils, blood sprays from the showerheads, and the group finds a freezer containing suspended human corpses. When people start dying, the cruise liner's second-in-command, Trevor Marshall (Richard Crenna) realizes they are aboard a former Nazi torture ship and that his superior, Captain Ashland (George Kennedy), is being possessed by Nazi spirits.

PHOBIA (1980)
STARRING PAUL MICHAEL GLASER, SUSAN HOGAN AND JOHN COLICOS
DIRECTED BY JOHN HUSTON

Dr. Peter Ross (Paul Michael Glaser: TV's *Starsky & Hutch*) is a psychiatrist in charge of treating a group of patients who suffer from various phobias, including claustrophobia, acrophobia (a fear of heights), agoraphobia (a fear of open spaces) and ophidiophobia (a fear of snakes). The patients are convicted criminals who are promised early releases if they can overcome their neuroses, but during the course of their treatment, each of Ross' patients is killed by the thing he or she fears most. Despite the film's interesting premise and the involvement of iconic American filmmaker John Huston (*The Maltese Falcon*), this Toronto-lensed psychological thriller is one of the weaker entries of the tax shelter period.





PIN: A PLASTIC NIGHTMARE

(1988)

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR SANDOR STERN

RELEASED AMONGST A GAGGLE OF SEQUELS TO *HALLOWEEN*, *FRIDAY THE 13TH* AND *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, this overlooked Canadian gem stands head and shoulders above other late-'80s fright fare. Based on the 1981 novel by Andrew Neiderman, the film tells of a deeply disturbed young man, Leon (David Hewlett *Cube*, *Splice*), the abnormal relationship he shares with his younger sister, Ursula (Cynthia Preston *Prom Night III: The Last Kiss*), and an anatomically correct medical mannequin named "Pin."



Isolated as a child by an obsessive-compulsive mother (Bronwen Mantel *Gothika*), young Leon grows up to form an unnatural bond with the life-sized figure, which is housed in the office of his physician father, Dr. Linden (Terry O'Quinn *The Stepfather*, TV's *Lost*), and used by the doctor to teach sex education to his children. After their parents are killed in a car crash, Leon brings Pin home to live with him and Ursula, eventually outfitting the figure with a suit, fake skin and a wig. When the appearance of an aunt – and a young man Stan (John Ferguson *Hard Core Logo*), with affections for Ursula – threatens the bizarre family set-up, Leon decides that he and Pin must take care of the outsiders.

A truly unsettling offering that doesn't rely on violence or gore to make its viewers' skin crawl, *Pin* benefits from first-rate performances by its cast (Hewlett, in particular, is stellar) and the assured direction of writer/director Sandor Stern (who is also well known for penning the screenplay for 1979's *The Amityville Horror*). The victim of poor theatrical distribution, this Montreal-shot film has slowly built a cult following for its oddball premise and the creepy Pin doll.

How did you first became aware of the Andrew Neiderman novel?

I had a friend who was an agent and he was representing Andrew for movies and television. He asked me if I was interested in reading the galleys and I said, "Sure." I read it and loved it and made a deal. I optioned the book and wrote the screenplay on spec. And then it took me about five years to get it off the ground.

Why did it take so long?

Part of it was the fact that it really didn't fit into the normal genre of a horror movie. It wasn't a "slice-and-dice" movie. It was a psychological thriller and the leads were kids. So, in an industry that is always looking for a "star" protagonist, I was trying to tell something where the star was a teenager. So, based on that, it was a difficult sell.



Joan Austen as Nurse Spaulding

How did producers Pierre David and René Malo become interested in the project?

That came about because I happened to be flying back from Toronto to LA and found myself with Pierre David, and we were talking and I told him about *Pin*. He read [the script] and really liked it and wanted to get it and sell it to Universal. But he ran into a stumbling block. And then, two years later, I happened to be up in Toronto, directing a movie that René Malo was producing, and I gave him the script and he loved it as well. And I guess it was six or seven months later at some Canadian film industry event here in L.A. that I bumped into Pierre again. And I was talking with him when René came over – and the two had just made a deal to produce movies together – and René said, "This guy has an incredible movie called *Pin*. You should read it!" And Pierre said, "I did read it. And I loved it." So, they said, "Let's do it!" And so that is the genesis of getting the movie done. And then they went to Cannes with a poster, and they sold it country-by-country based on the tagline "From the writer of *The Amityville Horror*" and the poster. So, they raised the money to make the movie.

What is it about Neiderman's novel that grabbed you?

When I read the book, what struck me – and this is something that has always interested me – is the fact that you can find siblings taking different paths in life. But how can that possibly be? They grew up in the same family. Well, the fact is that none of us grow up in the same family. Every single one of us has a different relationship with our parents. So, that's what really fascinated me about it. On top of that was the whole schizophrenia element, which – because I'm a physician – really interested me. So, those were the primary reasons why I wanted to do it.

Did you incorporate any aspects of your own experiences as a doctor into the character of Dr. Linden?

No, not really. Because the medical aspect of the story isn't really that significant. He happens to be a doctor – and that's the reason for him having the anatomical dummy – but aside from that, he's a man who has difficulty dealing with his children. He's very stunted, socially, and, like his wife, is obsessive-compulsive. So, he actually has his own neurosis.

The reason he uses Pin in the first place is because he can't really communicate with his children on a level that many parents can, and therefore needs the anatomical figure to do that.

Yes. That's his surrogate. Why couldn't he just talk to his children about sex education himself? Well, he obviously has issues. So, when the kids are laughing after the deaths of their parents about their mother washing his penis, they're very aware of the fact that they had very repressed parents.

Speaking of sexuality in the movie, there's a rather disturbing scene in the film involving Pin and a nurse.

I remember that I wanted to humanize Pin a lot more

in the mind of Leon. So, I came up with the scene of the nurse [using the anatomical figure as a sex aid], which I thought was effective and made Pin seem more human.

Pin's face seems to wear an expression of distress, as though he's being violated. Was that your intent?
Yes. I wanted that intentionally because I wanted Leon to feel that [Pin] was being abused. And after all, it's all from Leon's point of view. So, all the minor facial expressions that are there, are expressions that are laid onto Pin because of Leon's point of view: that this is how Pin should feel about it.

The novel seems to imply that there was an unusually close relationship between Leon and Ursula, but this aspect is more or less absent in your film. What was your reasoning for changing that?
Well, as I said, my priority was dealing with siblings who walked different paths, even though they came from the same family. And I wanted her to survive and be as normal as you can possibly be. It's very interesting, when we screened the movie, both Andrew [Neiderman] and I were there and when we had a discussion afterward with the audience, a few people said, "Well, you know, we were disappointed, because we read the book and we wondered why there wasn't any incest in the movie." And I asked, "Was there incest in the book?" Well, no, there wasn't. But people read that into it. It's interesting, because I don't recall a sentence in the book where brother and sister were having sex.

How did you go about casting the picture? Was it a difficult process?
It was a difficult process. Terry O'Quinn was the least difficult. Firstly, we needed some semblance of an American name, because after all, this was being done for New World [Pictures], and they insisted on some name recognition. And the only way we could do that was with one of the adult roles. And when I saw him in *The Stepfather*, I knew that's who I wanted. As far as [David Hewlett and Cynthia Preston] were concerned, I read a lot of people and I was very, very happy that I got them both. They were wonderful. As for the younger kids, I had to cast them in Montreal, and of course, the English-speaking population is smaller. So that was a very difficult task to find the actors.

Was the Pin doll made especially for the movie?
He was specifically made for the film and was the most expensive actor in the movie. [Laughs.] And we also used a mime in some scenes – like the wheelchair scenes, when Pin is in silhouette.

How long was the shoot?
Thirty days.

Despite the fact that it got some great reviews, Pin didn't fare well at the box office. Do you think this can be attributed to it not receiving a wide US theatrical release?
It got no release. Because by the time I delivered it, [New World] was out of the feature film business; they were gone as a feature film studio. So, it went direct-to-video. It only got a feature film release in Canada. Of course, I was incredibly disappointed by that.

Did Pin do anything for you career-wise?
No, it did nothing. Because I shot it in Canada, and it appeared in Canada, but no one [in the US] saw it. And as far as my career was concerned, it was a dead issue. It had done a great deal for me only in terms of people knowing who I am, because over the years people were constantly talking to me about *Pin*. *The Amityville Horror* also has great value to me, although it was nowhere near, for me, of the quality of *Pin*.

You've stated that you would like to remake Pin. What can you tell me about that?
Well, I'm not a big fan of remakes, personally [but] I would be able to do a great many more subtle things with Pin's expressions with CGI. And it has reached the point where it's not as expensive as it was ten years ago. It wasn't around when I made *Pin*, [where] everything had to be done physically and not in post production. So, it will be interesting to see what I could do to heighten the humanity of the dummy.

What is it about your film that you feel resonates with audiences?
I think part of it is that it has a sense of reality to it. The story comes out of the psychology of these characters, so there's a sense of honesty about it. And I think that you're not watching a movie where you have ill feelings towards the protagonist. You feel bad for [Leon] because you know where he comes from, you know what started all of this for him. You feel terrible for him, and you feel terrible for his sister because she's trying to be as strong as she can possibly be for her brother, knowing all the time that he's very ill, and wanting to protect him. There's a strong familial bond here that people recognize.

DAVID HEWLETT

PROLIFIC ENGLISH CANADIAN ACTOR DAVID HEWLETT CAN TRACE HIS CAREER BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL, when he appeared in student films by future *Splice* director Vincenzo Natali. Since his breakout role in *Pin*, Hewlett has appeared in dozens of movies and TV series, including *Cube*, *Splice* and *Stargate SG-1*.

What do you remember about Pin's casting process?

The casting was gruelling. I didn't really think about it being my first lead, that this was a big thing, so that helped me. I remember the wonderful casting agent, Stuart Aikins, coming out of the room after I did my audition. I thought I had been amazing, but he whacks me over the head and goes, "That was brilliant! We couldn't see a fucking thing, keep your head up!" My head had been down so much you couldn't see anything on camera, only the top of my head.

What drew you to the script?

I love how incredibly uptight Leon was, because at that age I was trying very hard to be cool and fighting the fact that I was incredibly uptight and controlling. I grew up in a great family and in a great neighbourhood, and as an actor I felt ashamed of all of that. I wanted to be edgy. I'd been given this part that was so close to my life, without the psychotic part – this character that was incredibly insecure in his need to control everything. I think I revelled in that part so much because I did find a very strong connection between Leon and myself.

Do you have any anecdotes from the set that you can remember?

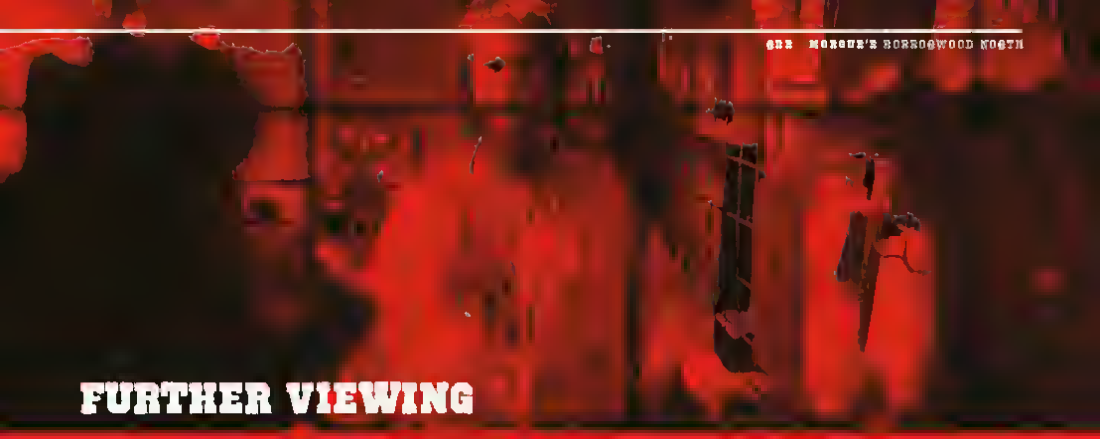
I remember reading this stuff for research – a lot of it was about Manson and cults and killings – and I remember someone said, "If you reach this point where you go too far, there's no going back." Like, if you talk yourself into a psychosis, there's no coming back from it. Being the hypochondriac that I am, I became paranoid that I had somehow damaged myself psychologically doing this research.

Why do you think the film still resonates with audiences?

I think it speaks to a lot of subtle horrors for people. The horror of this implied incest, the horror of repressed sexuality, the horror of the misunderstandings through lack of communication. There's this well-meaning father and a distant mother, so there's this horrible, cold relationship between all these family members. It speaks to those moments where you feel separated and you feel misunderstood by your family – or when you lose them, for that matter.



David Hewlett as Leon



FURTHER VIEWING

TERROR TRAIN (1980)
STARRING JAMIE LEE CURTIS, BEN JOHNSON AND HART BOCHNER
DIRECTED BY ROGER SPOTTISWOODE

It's New Year's Eve and a group of medical students, including Alana (Jamie Lee Curtis) and Doc (Hart Bochner), are having a masquerade party aboard a train, complete with entertainment by a magician and David Copperfield. But a masked maniac begins killing the partygoers one-by-one, always donning the costume of his most recent victim. Who is slashing their way through the group? And does it have anything to do with the cruel prank that once landed former student Kenny Hampton (Derek McKinnon) in a mental hospital?

THE PIT (1981)
STARRING SAMMY SNYDERS, JEANNIE ELIAS AND SONJA SMITS
DIRECTED BY LEW LEHMAN

This fantasbcally strange movie tells of twelve-year-old Jamie (Sammy Snyders), who is bullied by neighbourhood kids and has no friends except his teddy bear. Jamie tells his babysitter, Sandy (Jeannie Elias), about a secret he's keeping. he's found a pit in the forest that contains hunched-over, yellow-eyed creatures he calls "Tra la logs." Sandy doesn't believe him, but the boy is telling the truth and he decides to feed tha hairy beings – first with meat purchased from the local butcher, and later with the people who have mistreated him.

DEADLY EYES (1982)
STARRING SAM GROOM, SARA BOTSFORD AND SCATMAN CROTHERS
DIRECTED BY ROBERT CLOUSE

After a rat colony chows down on steroid-treated corn, the supersized rodents invade a city and feed on its inhabitants, including subwey passengers and, in one particularly shocking scene, a toddler who's been left unattended. Health Inspector Kelly Leonard (Sare Botsford) and high school teacher Paul Harris (Sam Groom) attempt to stop the rats' reign of terror. A co-production with Hong Kong's Golden Harvest Films, *Deadly Eyes* – which is loosely based on James Herbert's 1974 novel *The Rats* – famously used dachshunds in rat costumes to achieve some of the giant-rodent effects.

THE INCUBUS (1982)
STARRING JOHN CASSAVETES, KERRIE KEANE AND JOHN IRELAND
DIRECTED BY JOHN HOUGH

A mysterious killer is stalking the town of Galen, with female victims showing signs of sexual assault. Town doctor Sam Cordell (John Cassavetes) discovers that the attacker's DNA is unlike any human's DNA. Is the attacker a local teen who claims to have visions involving the murder victims? Or are the killings the work of an incubus – a demon rapist that has taken possession of someone in the town? Despite its lurid subject matter, the film is a surpnsingly restrained adaptation of Rey Russell's 1976 novel.







(1987)

THE GATE

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TIBOR TAKACS

FOR HORROR FANS WHO WERE TOO YOUNG TO SIT INTO CINEMAS TO SEE the latest R-rated slasher adventures of Freddy or Jason, the 1987 creature feature *The Gate* was a worthy substitution. But just because it was PG-13, didn't mean it was strictly kid's stuff. In fact, unlike the similarly-rated but comedy-laced *Gremlins* (1984) and *Critters* (1986), *The Gate* manages to amp up the suspense and scare factor quite a bit.

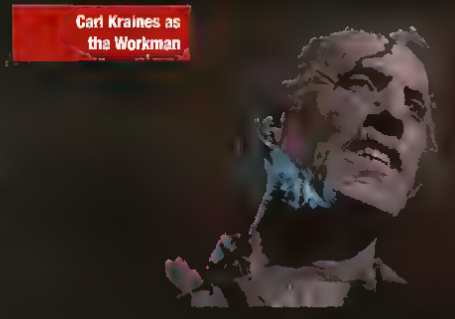
When an old tree is removed from his backyard, young Glen (Stephen Dorff) notices a geode – a hollow rock with a crystal-lined centre – drop from the roots of the tree. In searching for more of the objects, he and best friend Terry (Louis Tripp) dig up the (now filled-in) area where the tree used to be. Unfortunately, in addition to finding another geode, it seems the pair has also unwittingly cracked open an entranceway to Hell – which sets off a chain of supernatural events while Glen's parents are away for the weekend. Initially, Glen is levitated during a party given by his older sister Alexandra or "Al" (Christa Denton); and Terry – who is bunking over at Glen's for the night – has a vision that his deceased mother has come back, but when he hugs her, it turns out to be the corpse of his friend's dog.

Terry tells Glen that the events seem to mirror those depicted in a heavy metal album, *The Dark Book*, released by a now-deceased band named Sacrifyx. However, things start really getting strange after the dog is buried in the hole in the backyard: after investigating a shattered window in his bedroom, Glen, Al and Terry are attacked by a creature with clawed hands that tries to pull Al under the bed. The trio also finds itself under siege by demonic minions: small, bald, sharp-toothed and clawed creatures and a zombie-like workman who attempt to sacrifice them so that the demonic "Old Gods" may establish a "Hell on earth."

Made for $2.5 million, *The Gate* hit theatres in May 1987, and went on to become a box office hit, earning $13,539,458 in domestic receipts alone. Directed by Tibor Takács (*Metal Messiah*, *I, Madman*), the film is remembered for the surprisingly strong performances by the young leads (Dorff is the standout, in what was his first film role) and fantastic special effects (courtesy of Randall Cook) and makeup (by Craig Reardon) that manage to hold up incredibly well today.

A sequel, *Gate 2: Trespassers* a.k.a. *Gate II: Return to the Nightmare*, also directed by Takács, was released three years later, but without the participation of Dorff or Denton. Tripp returned to reprise his role as an older Terry, who, in trying to get his alcoholic father off of the bottle, winds up summoning demons again and must try to save a girl, Liz (Pamela Segall), from ending up as one of their sacrificial victims.

Takács takes us back to the 'burbs to remember *The Gate*.



Carl Kraines as the Workman

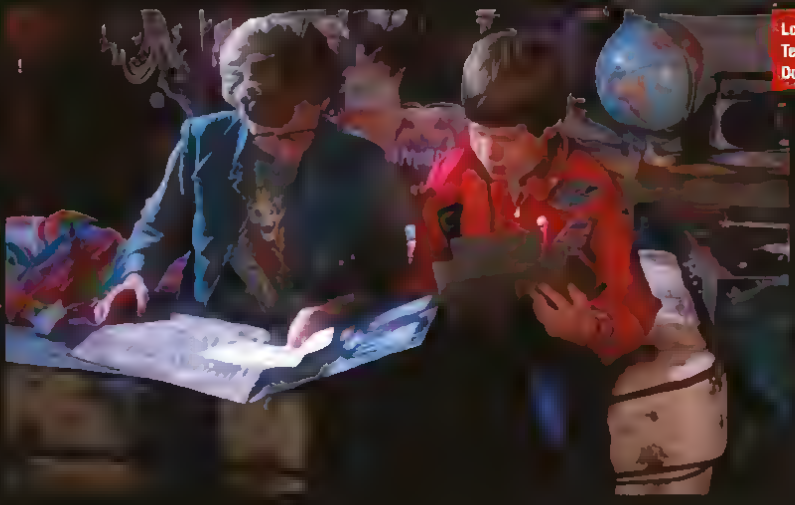
At what age did you become interested in being a filmmaker? Was there a particular catalyst?
It was in high school in grade 12 that we had an assignment and a friend suggested we do it on film. I had access to a Super 8 movie camera and a hand-cranked little editor, and I had shot several playful vignettes that led us to believe we could shoot a movie. It was about pollution and the environment.

How did you become attached to* The Gate*?
I was in Los Angeles promoting a script that I had co-written with [writer/producer] Stephen Zoller called *Sticks and Stones*. This was going to be our next passion project. I had a meeting with John Kemeny, a prominent producer of theatrical movies, about it, and he said he would be interested if we changed the age of the hero kids in the script from eleven and twelve to seventeen and eighteen. This was something we definitely didn't think would work and didn't want to do, and we left it at that. However, several months later, I had a call from his secretary and she said John wanted me to come to his office. I thought he had recanted and would want to go ahead with *Sticks and Stones* – our way. When I got to his office, to my surprise he wasn't interested in our project but wanted me to read two scripts and choose the one I wanted to direct. One was *The Gate* and the other was *The Wraith*.



Did your interest in music influence you in any way while working on* The Gate *and its sequel? For instance, did you have any input into the script when it came to elements of the heavy metal band, the record, etc.?
I used my music contacts to get some cool music for the film and suggested to [screenwriter] Michael Nankin that we use heavy metal music to connect our heroes to the demons instead of having them go to a library and do research.

When I watch the film now, I'm quite amazed at just how great Stephen Dorff was as Glen. I'm wondering what it was like working with him, as well as the other young leads?
They were all great. A delay in the start of pre-production gave us the opportunity to cast a wide net and audition a lot of kids.



Louis Tripp (left) as Terry and Stephen Dorff as Glen



The film is fondly remembered for its imaginative special effects. Were there any scenes or effects in particular that presented difficulties for you or the effects crew?

The decision to do in-camera effects presented the greatest challenge. *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* was a film that I loved as a kid. When [visual effects artist] Randy Cook came on board and suggested the forced perspective approach, I was all for it. Each forced perspective shot took two days to set up and filled a giant sound stage. Our production designer, Bill Beeton, had his work cut out for him designing and building the sets and props in forced perspective. All the blending of the foreground to the over-scale background took painstaking work. Randy would hand-paint the edges himself and do the detailed lighting to make sure they blended seamlessly. We were always in a time crunch on each set built, because the next set had to be started the next day. We had a lot of these forced perspective shots and each one required a custom set.

I was surprised to read recently that in addition to the film's stop-motion effects, there were also apparently some sequences where you used actors in costumes to portray the little demon minions. Is that true? And if so, could you explain that process a little bit?

We basically used an encyclopedia of different effects techniques to get the film done. This may have contributed to the success of the effects and the "wow factor." By the time the audience figured out how we did one effect, they were presented with another "wow" effect that they hadn't seen before and was done by using a different technique. The minions were sometimes puppets, at other times people in suits – sometimes using a blue screen, and other times using trick perspective.

The Gate *ended up being a pretty big hit at the box office, even earning the Genie Awards' Golden Reel Award. Did the film's success help you in any way?*

A film that is as successful as *The Gate* can't help but look good on a director's resume, but it also locks you into a specific genre. And almost every film that was offered to me was a kiddie horror [movie]. I just didn't want to repeat myself and thought with the success of the film, I could jump genres. I would always love horror, but opportunities to try other genres were hard to come by.

The 1990 sequel,* Gate 2: Trespassers *(aka:* Gate II: Return to the Nightmare*), seemed to be scaled down somewhat when it came to some of the effects, such as only having one demon minion instead of several. Was that a budgetary decision, or a change motivated by the story?

The real story of the *Gate 2* budget is that from the time we had a green light till we finished post production, the value of the Canadian dollar had shifted drastically – and not in our favour.

Was there any reason why Stephen Dorff and Christa Denton did not reprise their roles for it?

We just [wanted] to make the sequel very different than the first one since the minions and the demon lord would be back for sure, and we wanted to make the film a new and different experience for the audience. We didn't want to repeat ourselves.

FURTHER VIEWING

MURDER BY PHONE A.K.A. BELLS (1982)

STARRING RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN, JOHN HOUSEMAN AND SARA BOTSFORD
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL ANDERSON

A young woman picks up a ringing telephone and begins to convulse and bleed from her eyes before a blast sends her flying backward. Her death is officially attributed to a heart attack, but science professor Nat Bridger (Richard Chamberlain) doesn't buy it. Meanwhile, others across the city are suffering the same fate when they pick up their phones, and Bridger finds that someone with a homicidal grudge is murdering people by sending lethal bursts of energy across phone lines.

GRAVEYARD SHIFT (1987)

STARRING SILVIO OLIVIERO, HELEN PAPAS AND CLIFF STOKER
DIRECTED BY BERARD CICCORITTI

In this highly stylized take on the vampire flick, Stephen Tsepes (Silvio Oliviero) is a bloodsucking cab driver who preys on willing female victims. He finds himself strongly attracted to Michelle (Helen Papas), and offers the married woman an opportunity for eternal life. Also known under its DVD title *Central Park Drifter*, the film spawned a 1988 follow-up, *The Understudy: Graveyard Shift II*, also helmed by Gerard Ciccoritti and featuring Oliviero.

BLUE MONKEY (1987)

STARRING STEVE RAILSBACK, GWYNYTH WALSH AND SUSAN ANSPACH
DIRECTED BY WILLIAM FRUET

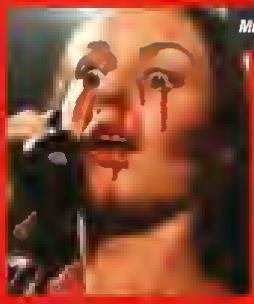
This throwback to '50s monster flicks has an elderly man show symptoms of an allergic reaction after pricking his finger on a strange plant. He's rushed to the hospital, where a worm-like creature emerges from his mouth. While the parasite is being kept in a room for observation, a group of young patients unwittingly pour growth serum on it. Soon the small, insect-like creature transforms into a huge, monster-sized one that prowls the halls of the hospital in search of human victims.

ROCK 'N' ROLL NIGHTMARE A.K.A. THE EDGE OF HELL (1987)

STARRING JON MIKL THOR, JILLIAN PERN AND FRANK DIETZ
DIRECTED BY JOAN FASANO

Rocker John Triton (Jon Mikl Thor) and his band drive up to an isolated farmhouse to record some new music. Soon after settling in, strange things begin to happen and it isn't long before the rockers and their entourage are taken over by demonic influences. It's up to the buff, codpiece-wearing John to battle the forces of darkness (which like to throw squid-like creatures at him) and send the biggest demon of them all, Beelzebub, back to Hell.





Murder by Phone



CHAPTER 3



THE POST-TAX SHELTER YEARS (1989 - 2009)

AFTER THE TAX SHELTER BOOM OF THE MID-1970S TO EARLY '80S, Canada's film industry was bound to experience a slowdown. The inevitable decline came during the late 1980s, thanks to a reduction in the Capital Cost Allowance and the new direction of the Canadian Film Development Corporation, which was re-branded as Telefilm Canada in 1984. Telefilm's mandate was now extended to helping fund Canadian television programming, and theatrical film projects were able to apply for assistance from a new initiative called the Feature Film Fund.

A further reduction of the tax shelters in 1988 down to a lowly 30 percent rate resulted in much less investment in Canadian film, as it provided little incentive for wealthy dentists, doctors and other professionals to keep pouring money into low-budget horror flicks.

Even without the funds generated by the tax shelter, however, some indie filmmakers decided to try their hand at helming their own – albeit micro-budgeted – flicks, such as the gloriously inept *Things* (1989), in which beer-guzzling brothers and their friend are menaced by oversized ant-like creatures in their house, and *Revenge of the Radioactive Reporter* (1990), which – true to its title – tells of a newsman seeking revenge on those who dumped him into a container of toxic waste, turning him into a being with gooey, melted flesh (and who, with his fedora, somewhat resembles Freddy Krueger).

Canuck genre output was even sparser during the 1990s, and consisted mainly of sequels and straight-to-video releases, including *Gate II: Trespassers* (1990), *Xtro II. The Second Encounter* (1990), *Blood & Donuts* (1995), *Night of the Demons III* (1997) and the New Brunswick-shot *Bleeders* (1997). Vincenzo Natali's *Cube* (1997) was one of the only Canadian genre films of the period to make the leap outside Canada to play festivals worldwide and attract a strong international cult following.

The new millennium saw yet another resurgence of the genre in Canada, with fresh, innovative takes on classic horror tropes such as the werewolf-themed *Ginger Snaps* (2000), its sequel, *Ginger Snaps 2: Unleashed* (2004) and prequel, *Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning* (2004); the off-the-wall DIY effort *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* (2001), and zombie comedies *Graveyard Alive A Zombie Nurse in Love* (2003) and *Fido* (2006). The decade ended with such cerebral genre offerings as Bruce McDonald's *Pontypool* (2008), which was derived from the 1995 novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* by Tony Burgess (who also wrote the film's screenplay), and Natali's brainy sci-fi shocker *Splice* (2009).





GINGER SNAPS

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JOHN FAWCETT, SCREENWRITER KAREN WALTON AND STAR KATHARINE ISABELLE

BRIGITTE FITZGERALD AND HER SISTER GINGER ARE NOT YOUR AVERAGE TEENAGE GIRLS. Outcasts in the dreary, cookie-cutter suburban community of Bailey Downs, the teens have a fascination with death that extends to staging and photographing elaborately gruesome tableaux for a school project.

One night, the pair decide to play a prank on a popular student who pushed Brigitte (Emily Perkins) into a dead dog, but as they cut through a park on the way Ginger (Katharine Isabelle) notices menstrual blood dripping down her leg and she's attacked by a large animal. Brigitte manages to subdue the creature long enough for both girls to escape. When it chases after them, the thing is struck and killed on the road by the local drug dealer, Sam (Kris Lemche).

Over the course of the month, Ginger begins to change. Initially she has mood swings and grows strange hairs from her wounds, but soon develops into an attractive (and sexually active), confident young woman. But as the days progress, her transition into womanhood is mirrored by her increasingly animal-like appearance. Brigitte, convinced that her sister was attacked by a werewolf, enlists Sam's help, and they try to stop Ginger's complete transformation into a beast.

Directed by John Fawcett (*The Oark*, TV's *Orphan Black*) and written by Karen Walton (TV's *Flashpoint*, *The Listener*), *Ginger Snaps* has been praised by critics and audiences alike for Perkins and Isabelle's standout performances and its multilayered, darkly humorous screenplay. The movie's success on home video led to two more installments – a sequel, *Ginger Snaps: Unleashed* and a prequel, *Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning*, both of which featured Perkins and Isabelle – which were shot back-to-back and released in 2004. Fawcett, Walton and Isabelle remember the Canadian werewolf film famous for its ferocious females.

***How did you get the idea for* Ginger Snaps?**

John Fawcett: I had this idea that I wanted to make a horror film about two weirdo sisters who are growing up in the suburbs. In the beginning, I wanted to make a metamorphosis kind of body-horror movie. I had a number of influences at that time, like David Cronenberg's *The Fly* [and] *Dead Ringers*. *Heavenly Creatures* was a big influence as well, just from the dynamic I wanted to see from these two sisters – very sort of inseparable, and this life that was their own in the basement of their house, and then one of them essentially starts to transform. I think I shied away from the idea of werewolves initially because just saying "werewolf" back then kind of made me cringe. There were very, very few examples of werewolf movies that weren't stupid. There was *An American Werewolf in London* and elements of other things, like maybe *The Howling*, but "werewolf" alone kind of felt cheesy – but I came around on that.

Karen, I heard you were initially hesitant to work on* Ginger Snaps. *Why was that? And what made you change your mind?

Karen Walton: I was new to screenwriting and very



Katharine Isabelle as Ginger

focused on my then-better understanding of other genres. At the time I was especially smitten with foreign drama [and] art-house films, horror wasn't my area of expertise. How could I write a teen-girl werewolf movie? Shouldn't someone who loves them write them? Rightly or wrongly, the fact was, at the time, I had this very limited experience and impression of the genre – that young women usually appeared in horror pictures to be sexed-up victims, to add to the body count or be rescued by men. I wanted to write women as the heroes of their own stories, [where] victories weren't about landing a boyfriend.

John changed my mind about my suitability for a horror film. He said I could and should write the movie I'd want to see, and that we could break any rules we wanted, [such as] the full moon/silver bullet lore, and boyfriends being the sole preoccupation of young female leads. He also exposed me to a whole canon of horror films I had missed. They really opened my eyes to the true state of the genre at the time. The works of David Cronenberg and Peter Jackson, therefore, also played a big part in my appreciation of what was really possible in the realm.

John, I understand that you had some difficulty trying to cast the characters before Katharine Isabelle and Emily Perkins showed up.

JF: There were young actors back then who were more recognizable, but the bottom line is we had a script that was concerning people because it was violent. It was a dark, comedic violence, but just the subject matter set off an alarm. We sent it to Scarlett Johansson, and her mother thought it was too much, and there was a lot of language and violence that she didn't really want Scarlett doing. And we had difficulty with casting directors. Columbine had just happened and everyone was really sensitive about any subject matter that had kids killing kids. In fact, there were some casting directors in Toronto who tried to boycott *Ginger Snaps*. It was in the newspapers. People were writing about our script like it was this horrible atrocity even though no one had actually read it. On one hand, it brought this amped-up attention to the script before we even shot anything. But in another sense, it made things very complicated. We had trouble with locations because we had to shoot in a school, and people knew who we were and they didn't want anything do with us. We were just lucky to get Katharine and Emily.

You said you had trouble securing locations. Did that extend to securing financing for the film?

JF: No, we made the movie with Telefilm, and also the Ontario Film Development Corporation was still around back then. There were tax credits. We made it for about five million bucks. They were all solidly behind the project. Everyone believed in us and wanted to make the movie but it definitely had these other issues because it was this violent, teens-killing-teens movie. That made it difficult because the Toronto School Board wouldn't let us near their property. We ended up shooting in Etobicoke because it was under different jurisdiction and we only ended up shooting exteriors at the school. Fortunately, we snuck onto the set of *Jett Jackson* and we were able to use the interior school set that they had built.

Katharine, can you tell me a bit about the audition process for* Ginger Snaps*? Did you specifically read for the part of Ginger, or did you audition for the role of Brigitte as well?

Katharine Isabelle: We just got sent sides for the script, like we always do. I never auditioned for Brigitte; I was always going to be Ginger. Emily Perkins and I had the same agent at the time, so we read for each other off-camera. Like any other time doing that, you tape it and hope that they give a shit, and they did. So we sent another tape in and the director came out to meet us. In the meantime, Emily had shaved her head. That's why she wears that awful wig for the whole movie. I was like, "What have you done? You've ruined our chance at this movie!" She had perfect Brigitte hair before and then one night, she just decided she was going to shave it all off. They did fly us out for a screen test, though, which was a bit of a process. But we got the parts and the rest is history.

What were your thoughts on the script? Did it strike you as progressive or groundbreaking in any way?

KI: When I got the script, which was in '97, it was before werewolves were cool again. It was also this strange movie about menstruation and teenaged girls, but I really liked it and I thought it was great and funny and I



loved the characters – how smart, acerbic and witty they were – and so did Emily. We just didn't think anyone else would.

Karen, it's evident that Ginger's transformation from girl to wolf is a metaphor for puberty. Was that your intention from the start, or something that grew out of working on the script?

KW: Well, in fact the arc is puberty as monstrous, and in Ginger's case, self-destructive. That all came out of working on the script, particularly with the fresher eyes – later in its development – of our story editor, Ken Chubb. He pointed out its presence in the story as a sort of tangible but under-developed theme and helped me fine-tune and finish the thoughts and character arcs accordingly.

Ginger and Brigitte are certainly victims, but they become empowered young women as well. Was making them strong female characters – and, in Ginger's case, the aggressor – a reaction to the way women are often portrayed in horror films?

KW: I was consciously trying to write first about experiences I myself recognized. I had been that age, obviously, and most portrayals of young women in movies of the day – and horror in particular – did not reflect how many young women felt about this crucial period in their personal development. Many of us found the experience of being that age itself a nightmare, on many levels. Your chief preoccupation was surviving all the kinds of changes we were facing daily – biologically, socially and in our most intimate childhood relationships. Brigitte and Ginger were always described as self-declared outsiders, they did not want to belong to the culture they saw around them and were actively, consciously refusing to play any of the traditional movie high school roles as girls. So they came out of the box with strong ideas – a strong take on the world they were put in.

Was it your idea to make the transformation a permanent effect rather than a temporary condition triggered by a full moon? And can you explain why you chose to make Ginger's transformation a gradual process?

KW: The idea to break the back-and-forth transformation rule was made early on, and was, I think, a result of John and I committing early on to the notion that everything we thought we knew about werewolves could be up for grabs. We knew we wanted a point-of-no-return story, and that blended well with the arc of the irreversible alterations of adolescence. As with adolescence, and who we become as we each go through it, the process takes place over time, but there's no going back. Ginger's metamorphosis takes place over [the course of] a month – a typical female menses-



Emily Perkins as Brigitte



month is the biological clock measuring the escalating experience. Brigitte's transformation is on the same clock because they begin the story inseparable, and it becomes about surviving a relationship with someone who just isn't who she used to be, and will never be again.

Katharine, what were the biggest challenges you had when portraying Ginger?

KI: The prosthetics – absolutely the prosthetics. I read the script like anyone would, and you think about how the finished product is going to look. But you don't think about the hours of prosthetic work with alcohol-based paints, getting migraines, throwing up, breathing through straws. I had a mental breakdown at one point. It was six hours of prosthetics, so your whole face can't breathe. Your nose runs and you have Q-tips shoved up your nose and then I've got this huge wig on and these terrible fingernails and contact lenses so I can't see anything. And I can't speak because I've got these fangs in. You're in your own tiny bubble – complete sensory deprivation. And you're just, like, "I am trying not to fucking freak out" when you're working twenty-hour days and you're exhausted already. That was my first time working with prosthetics like that, so I had no idea just what I was getting into. Now, I can handle it.

John, why did you choose to use prosthetics and practical effects, as opposed to CGI?

JF: Back in the fall of '99, CGI was newish. There's a part of me that thinks I could have gone that route, but I don't know if I knew it entirely. Everything I had seen on a budget that we had – I didn't buy any of it. You had stuff out there that looked really great, but they were big, expensive movies that spent a lot of money on their CGI. And I didn't think that it would necessarily make [the movie] better. I watched movies like *The Fly* and *An American Werewolf in London* and I saw those things and I thought, "I want it to be old-school, I want to see the effect happen in front of me." I wanted there to be a tangible [feel] to the effects and the creatures. We did the best we could with the resources we had. I look back at it now and cringe a little at times, but at least that monster's in the same frame as Emily. That was something that really enhanced the performances and, I think, it gives it a somewhat more real, more visceral, gritty feel.

Ginger Snaps *has a large cult following. What do you think of its reputation as a modern horror classic?*

KI: I now have kids coming up to me who weren't even born when it first came out. I think it's because it's a classic story – whether you're a boy or a girl, everybody goes through this phase, puberty, where your body turns on you and you hate everybody. The fact that we used all practical effects [means] you can watch it now and it doesn't look like it was made fifteen years ago. [FX artist] Paul Jones did such amazing work on it. Add to that the biting and witty nature of the multidimensional characters that come alive in it. I think it all adds to it and I hope it continues to be a cult classic, because it's some cool shit.

KW: I remain absolutely amazed and very grateful for the fans' enthusiasm for the film. I don't know if it's a classic – it seems weird for me, as its writer, to acknowledge where it might sit in such a rich and diverse genre. But I am very, very happy Brigitte and Ginger found a home in so many cool hearts.

STEVEN HOBAN

PRODUCER STEVEN HOBAN HAS BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SOME OF CANADA'S MOST INTRIGUING GENRE FARE. Besides the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy, Hoban's credits include *Blood & Donuts* (1995), *Splice* (2009), *Haunter* (2013) and *Wolves* (2014). Hoban has recently turned to directing, helming an episode of the TV series *Darknet* and a segment of the 2014 anthology film *A Christmas Horror Story*.

***Can you tell me a bit about the genesis of* Ginger Snaps?**

Before we made [the 1992 short film] *Half Nelson*, there was another film that John [Fawcett] and I were developing called *Leave of Absence*, which was about a woman who transforms, [but] not into a werewolf. We had spent a lot of time working on that, but the Canadian Film Centre ended up rejecting it. That's when we started work on *Half Nelson*, but we had already been planning to make a film that had something to do with transformation. That was something that appealed to both of us.

How long did it take to get* Ginger Snaps *made?

We spent around four years on the script, which seems like a long time, but we weren't working on the script for the full four years. There was a four-year period between starting and then getting financed and shooting the movie. We did a lot of work on the screenplay and after we had a strong script, we took it around to LA. We had a lot of interest for what I think is two reasons: First, the story was original, and [second], the genre wasn't quite what it is now. It's really the tone of the two girls and the dialogue that set it apart. I think it's also the tone of the characters that kept it from getting made in Hollywood because, you know, those girls were pretty antisocial, and I think that made it hard to sell. Nowadays nobody would think twice about that.

Ginger Snaps *has been credited with resurrecting the horror film in Canada. What are your thoughts on that?*

Of all the stuff I've produced, it really stands out for me. The werewolf thing was really a metaphor for things that were real: being a teenager, becoming an adult. They were strong themes that connected with people. At the time, I had a niece who was twelve-years-old – which, in my opinion, was way too young for that movie – but for her and her friends, for eight years, that was their favourite movie. It resonated particularly well with teenaged girls. Of all the features I've done, it's the number one film that people still comment on to this day.





2005

THE DARK HOURS

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR PAUL FOX

DEVOID OF FLESH-EATING ZOMBIES, UNSTOPPABLE MASKED SLASHER BOOGEYMEN AND SUPERNATURAL CREATURES home invasion films are certainly within the realm of possibility. Perhaps that's what makes them all the more disturbing to audiences. One of the lesser known but more unusual and unsettling entries in this subgenre is the 2005 offering *The Dark Hours*.

When a no-nonsense psychiatrist named Samantha Goodman (Kate Greenhouse) learns that her brain tumour has grown so large that it's untreatable, she attempts to tell her distracted writer husband, David (Gordon Currie), about her condition by heading unannounced to their isolated, snowbound cottage in the woods – where he is staying for the weekend with Samantha's younger sister, Melody (Iris Graham) to finish work on his latest book.

Once at the cabin, the three pass some time playing a game of Operation, until Samanthe finally tells her husband and sister about the reemerging tumour. They're interrupted by a knock at the door and upon answering it find a young man named Adrian (Dov Tiefenbach), who tells them he was supposed to meet up with friends at a nearby home but no one has shown up. They invite him inside to warm up and offer him food, but the twitchy youth soon repays their good deed by pulling out a gun and shooting the family dog.

What at first appears to be possible robbery becomes something much worse when a snowmobile approaches bearing Harlan Pyne (Aidan Devine), a violent sociopath whom Samanthe had been treating. Angry at the doctor for using him as a test subject for an experimental cancer drug, Harlan, with the help of his young victim/lover, Adrian, exacts revenge by forcing Samantha and her family to play a sadistic game of "Truth or Dare."

The Dark Hours was made by prolific director Paul Fox whose numerous television credits include episodes of *Cold Squad*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Haven* and *Bitten*. It garnered awards from numerous international festivals including Montreal's Fantasia Film Festival, Scotland's Dead By Dawn Film Festival, Austin's Fantastic Fest and the Sitges-Catelonian International Film Festival in Spain.

Fox shines a light on his debut feature.

***Did you ever envision making a horror film prior to working on* The Dark Hours?**

I was really into horror films when I was a kid. I collected *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, and even convinced my father to drive my brother and me to New York for the first annual Famous Monsters convention in 1974. I loved the old Universal monster flicks, and Ray Harryhausen's Dynamation movies [such as] *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* and *20 Million Miles to Earth*. I made countless Super-8 horror movies with my friends, and animated Plasticine dinosaurs in the basement.

What sorts of horror do you gravitate towards then?

I like horror films that are thought-provoking and essentially believable, or at least presented in a believable way – movies like *Psycho*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Don't Look Now* and Jack Clayton's supremely creepy *The Innocents*. I wasn't a big fan of '80s horror – the slasher flicks. Some of them were fun, but they always struck me as inelegant – more about body count and gore than anything else, and not particularly interested in character, complexity or visual style. By the time *The Dark Hours* came about, I'd moved away from the genre, and was developing more dramatic,

character-driven projects, but stepping back into the horror realm was like re-discovering a comfortable old coat you haven't worn in a while, and it felt very right.

How did* The Dark Hours *come about?

In 2003, I visited a friend who was working on a TV series in Alberta, and there met one of the show's writers, Wil Zmak. While drinking in a Calgary bar, we began bemoaning the state of current horror films and, in the same conversation, realized there was a submission deadline approaching for the Canadian Film Centre's Feature Film Project. The CFC is an advanced film training centre, founded by [director] Norman Jewison, of which both Wil and I were alums. The Feature Film Project is a subsidiary of the CFC and provides funding for first or second features. The year Wil and I applied, along with producer Brent Barclay, the budget available for those features was $500,000. Wil and I hatched the basic idea on the spot, and then developed it long-distance between Calgary and Toronto. Wil wrote a draft, which we continued to expand upon, then submitted to the Feature Film Project. They'd already had success with Vincenzo Natali's *Cube*, so [they] were more than happy to see another genre script cross their doorstep.



Being a low-budget production, what were the biggest challenges you encountered while making the film?

We knew we were going to be working on a tight schedule; we shot *The Dark Hours* in eighteen days on Super 16mm, so we created a script that could be realized as efficiently as possible: five characters, one main location, set over the course of a single night. We shot five days on location – some roadside scenes, a diner, a school that we re-configured into a psychiatric hospital – and for the other thirteen days moved into a studio. Creating our cabin-in-the-woods inside a studio was a great help, as it allowed us to remain in the city, under controllable circumstances, and not have to take an entire crew on the road. It also allowed us to build the cabin that I envisioned, and one that was far more shootable than any real cabin could have been.

We only ever had one chance at our special effects, because we couldn't afford the time to clean up after the first take – as there was usually blood involved – and re-set for another. Luckily, most of the effects came off pretty successfully the first time.

As it is now, the ending of the film leaves some events open to interpretation. But you also shot additional footage that wrapped up things more neatly. Why did you cut that footage out?

Our first cut of the movie was more linear and spelled things out much more clearly, but during the editing we test-screened the film for our friends and peers, and in doing so discovered that the more explanation we peeled away, the more people liked the movie. There are some people who prefer to have everything spelled out for them and they can get really frustrated by the film, but I prefer for people to puzzle it out over a beer afterwards. The great thing is, I've heard several different interpretations of the film's events, all of which are valid.

Although* The Dark Hours *won numerous film festival awards and was very well received – both by audiences and critics – it didn't take in a lot of money during its theatrical release. However, it seems to have since found its audience on home video. What are your thoughts on this?

Film distribution is such a complicated, murky field, and getting more so by the minute, it's hard to point fingers. Part of me says, "We made this great, scary little flick that got terrific reviews, was embraced by hardcore horror fans, and won awards at virtually every genre festival that year, so who dropped the ball?" But another part of me realizes that it's a small film from Canada with an unknown cast and no studio backing, so what were its chances? Much of it comes down to luck and timing. A lot of good work falls through the cracks.

What does piss me off is that *The Dark Hours* virtually doesn't "exist" anymore. If someone says to me, "That sounds cool, where can I see it?" I don't know what to tell them. It's no longer available on DVD in either the US or Canada, and as far as I know it's not on Netflix or iTunes in either country. Last I looked it was available On Demand in Canada through Rogers, but it's buried in their Canadian Films section, under "Action." I have fantasies about the film being rediscovered: "One night Marty Scorsese was channel surfing. " But how can that ever happen if it's not out there to be found?

Do you feel there is still a market for independent Canadian horror films? Can our films still compete with those from other countries?

It's getting harder for independent films of all genres to compete in the world market, but a few – a very few – always manage to break through. It's a crazy business that way, but if it's in your blood to make movies, there's not much you can do except put it out there and hope it gets recognized. Ultimately, I made *The Dark Hours* for me and I'm very proud of it. And that's the best reason I know for trying to make it happen.



(2007)

END OF THE LINE

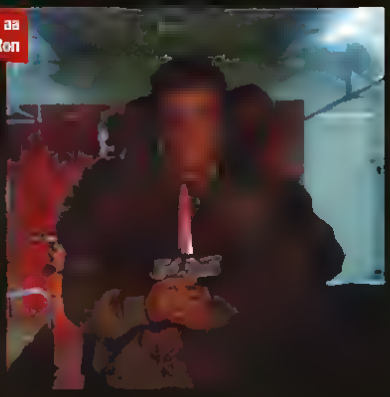
AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MAURICE DEVEREAUX

KILLING IN THE NAME OF GOD OR RELIGION HAS BEEN THE THEME OF A NUMBER OF HORROR FILMS OVER THE YEARS, including Ken Russell's highly controversial *The Devils* (1971) and the Bill Paxton-directed *Frailty* (2001). With the 2007 indie release *End of the Line*, director Maurice Devereaux (*Slashers*) takes the concept and gives it an inventive twist.

It's nearly midnight, and a psychiatric nurse, Karen (Ilona Elkin) and a young man, Mike (Nicolas Wright) are taking the subway home, only to be stranded aboard the darkened train when the power goes out. They are joined by a kindly-looking older woman who tells them she was afraid of being alone. Moments later, the lights come back on and, after receiving a message on her pager, the seemingly nice old lady pulls out what looks like a crucifix but is actually a dagger, and proceeds to stab Mike with it, yelling "Hellelujeh!"

Shocked and bloodied, Karen and an injured Mike exit the train. In the tunnel, they come across Nell (Neil Napier) and a handful of other terrified passengers fleeing from clean-cut, dagger- and sword-wielding missionary types. Taking temporary refuge in subway employee areas, the dwindling group of survivors learn that a religious cult has been carrying out the Judgment Day plans of its extremist leader – instructing followers to do "God's work" by killing everyone else around them and thus saving their souls.

Produced on a budget of approximately $350,000, the Montreal-shot (with a small portion filmed in Toronto) film garnered positive critical reviews and a favourable audience reception at Montreal's Fantasia Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), before making its way to DVD. In addition to directing, the Montreal-based Devereaux also took on writing, editing and producing duties for the film. He shares the experience of literal underground filmmaking.



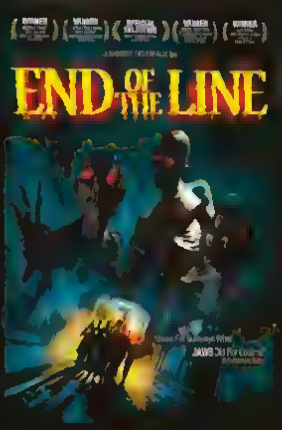
Kent McQueid as cult member Ron

Where did the idea for* End of the Line *come from?
Well, I have always been scared of cults and religion in general, and events like the Jonestown massacre, the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas subway attack and 9/11 were all blended into my subconscious. The story just came to me, almost fully formed, and I wrote it very quickly. My goal was to entertain and scare, but I still wanted to tackle the real issue of the dangers of religious indoctrination.

It's safe to say that* End of the Line *is a criticism of organized religion and of religious fanaticism. Have you encountered anybody who was upset with that aspect of the film?
There were only a few incidents, like when one spectator at the premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival



started a fight with other spectators [and] began shouting at people to leave this blasphemous movie. I was only mildly aware something was going on, as I was in the back of the theatre, nervous as hell. There was also one "religious" guy who was so offended by my film, he wrote me a hateful email with a non-stop barrage of insults. I replied politely, with a peaceful tone, filled with a bunch of Bible quotes showing all the ways he had himself contradicted the teachings of his own savior by attacking me, and then I ended with a few Jesus quotes about forgiveness. The guy wrote back totally confused and apologetic. The moral of the story? Never attack an atheist who knows the Bible better than you do and can easily show how hypocritical, brainwashed and uneducated you are.



***What difficulties did you face making* End of the Line?**

Well, besides the normal pressures of making any movie, we had to shoot during the worst heat wave in 70 years, in closed, unventilated spaces. It was literally hell. Or if it wasn't hot, it was freezing, when we shot deep underground in the tunnels that doubled for the subway. Everyone got sick from going from cold to hot.

On a personal side, not only did I have all the pressure that comes from producing and directing a feature film, but all my life savings were sunk into the film as well, so any setback could be financially devastating for me. Also, since it was a low budget picture with union actors, I had to do a deal with the union that in exchange for a lower rate, I had to pay the entire cast payroll for the entire film in advance, before the start of the shoot. Which meant that everything was locked in and I could not make any changes to the schedule, or cancel anything as the money was already given. So unfortunately, when my father passed away during the shoot, I could not take a day off to mourn or I would jeopardize the entire project, lose all my money and have no movie. So, I had to organize the funeral during my lunch break and schedule it on the next off day. This was a heartbreaking and cruel twist of fate that shows how Murphy's Law is the king of film shoots. I don't think there can ever be a situation where I will be under such duress ever again. Also, my girlfriend of four years broke up with me during the shoot, so it's safe to say I was put through the emotional wringer during this shoot, to see if I would crack.

The film has won several film festival awards and has garnered favourable reviews. How well did it do financially?



Yes, the film played in 38 festivals worldwide [and] won some audience and jury prizes, so I was very happy that the film pleased both the public and critics as well. I was fortunate to get lots of good reviews. So I guess you can say the film does have a cult following. Unfortunately, on the financial side, the film market for indie films had begun to crash, [due to] piracy and video stores closing, and even if I sold the film to many countries, the amounts paid out were about a quarter of what they used to pay ten years before for a similar-quality film. So, I ended up losing most of my investment. Also, Blockbuster owed me over $100,000 that I lost when they filed for bankruptcy. And this is not just [the case with] my film, most indie films that are self-financed never make any money. The business side of the film industry is really cutthroat, and I've met countless indie directors who have had most, if not all, of the money stolen from their films by shady sales agents and distributors. *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity* are lottery winners and do not reflect what most indie films go through. The best you can hope for is exposure and getting hired for a real paying gig to direct another film.

While American-made films continue to dominate cinema screens in English-speaking Canada, there appears to be a thriving homegrown film industry in Quebec. Why is that? Why do you think it's so difficult to get English Canada to watch and support Canadian films?

The reason some French-Canadian or Québécois features are popular is that they have a local star system, fostered from TV and theatre (like Michel Côte) and stand-up comedians (like Patrick Huard and Stephane Rousseau) who then transition to become movie stars. That, added to the fact the French-Canadian feel a bond with their own language and want to see themselves and relate to the characters on the screen. But anyone in English Canada that becomes a star – Jim Carrey, Mike Myers, Dan Aykroyd and many others – goes off to make Hollywood blockbusters. So English Canada is left with quite a dilemma: it must compete in the same language as the US but without the same budgets. Back in the tax shelter glory days when films like *Scanners*, *My Bloody Valentine* and *Porky's* were being made, they could compete with Hollywood, but that is not possible now, since the government funding agencies are less inclined to fund genre films [with] *Hobo with a Shotgun* being a rare exception.

Do you have any further horror-themed projects that you would like to make?

After years of struggling to get a new film made, I've written a huge historical novel that takes place in 16th-century medieval Scotland called *Royal Blood*. It's also horror-related, but it's based on fact, as it deals with King James VI and the real witch persecutions of the time. I spent over a year doing research and reading over 50 books on the subject, as well as going through the actual trial records of the victims from the Scottish archives. But since my prose is rather weak, I might transform the book into a graphic novel, where I can still "direct" the visuals. But I still feel the need to tell my stories and express myself creatively in one way or another, so hopefully *Royal Blood* will be finished in the next two years. Afterwards, my hope would be to transform it into a six-part miniseries, in the style of *Game of Thrones*.



FURTHER VIEWING

SKINWALKERS (2006)
STARRING JASON BEGHE, ELIAS KOTEAS AND NONNA MITRA
DIRECTED BY JIM ISAAC

A thirteen-year-old boy who's half-wolf and half-human has the power to end the curse of lycanthropy for two warring werewolf clans. One pack coexists peacefully with humans, the other group, which pulls double duty as a motorcycle gang, relishes the thrill of hunting people and the taste of human flesh. The evil werewolves – or skinwalkers, as they're called in Native Indian folklore – will do anything in order to find the boy and kill him before he can relieve them of their shapeshifting abilities.

FIDO (2006)
STARRING CARRIE-ANNE MOSS, BILLY CONNOLLY AND DYLAN BAKER
DIRECTED BY ANDREW CURRIE

After a radiation cloud decimates the dead and turns them into flesh-eating zombies, a company called Zomcon develops products to manage the undead onslaught. Thanks to a Zomcon collar that domesticates the deaders, people are able to keep zombies as servants. When Helen Robinson (Carrie-Anne Moss) decides to get a zombie (Billy Connolly) against her husband's wishes, the couple's bullied young son, Timmy (K'Sun Ray), comes to view the family rotter – whom he names "Fido" – as the only real friend he has. But when an unfortunate chain of events involving Fido threatens to start a zombie outbreak in the neighbourhood, Zomcon's head of security, Jonathan Bottoms (Henry Czerny), threatens to take Timmy's friend away.



Fido

JACK BROOKS: MONSTER SLAYER (2007)
STARRING TREVOR MATTHEWS, RACHEL SKARSTEN AND ROBERT ENGLUND
DIRECTED BY JON KNAUTZ

After witnessing the murders of his parents and sister at the teeth and claws of a hairy monster, Jack Brooks (Trevor Matthews) grows up to be a young man with anger management issues. Taking a night-school science class taught by Professor Crowley (Robert Englund), Jack – who works as a plumber – is approached by his teacher about helping him with faulty pipes in his home. But Jack's attempts to fix things in the professor's basement cause damage that makes its way to the backyard, where it awakens an evil entity that goes on to possess Crowley. When the professor shows up again to teach his class, he begins transforming into a large, tentacle-sprouting monster and attacks the students. It's then up to Jack to tap into his pent-up rage and kill the creature before it transforms the rest of his science class into murderous monsters as well.



Jack Brooks: Monster Slayer



PONTYPOOL

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER TONY BURGESS

ONE OF THE MOST RIVETING AND UNUSUAL GENRE FILMS TO BE RELEASED IN RECENT YEARS is 2008's *Pontypool*, directed by celebrated filmmaker Bruce McDonald (*Highway 61*, *Hard Core Logo*). Based upon the 1995 novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* by Tony Burgess (who also wrote the screenplay), the film features Stephen McHattie (*Death Valley*, *Haunter*) as a grizzled ex-shock jock named Grant Mazzy, who arrives one cold winter morning at his radio announcing job in the small town of Pontypool, Ontario. At first it seems the top news of the day will be a snowstorm, but it soon evolves into something much worse.

Shortly into his show, reports begin coming in detailing sudden irrational behaviour by the town's citizens, and later, of eyewitness accounts of inexplicable, horrific killings taking place across the community. The perpetrators, it seems, are residents who begin acting bizarrely before finally engaging in acts of extreme violence. While reports of civil unrest, murder and mayhem stream in, Mazzy, station manager Sydney Briar (Lisa Houle) and a young technical assistant, Laurel-Ann (Georgina Reilly) find themselves trapped inside the station, hiding from the growing mobs of mindless, homicidal maniacs outside – who have seemingly become afflicted with a behaviour-altering "virus" that has spread through the use of the English language.

Burgess shares some words about his bizarre premise for a "zombie" movie.

***Was there a specific catalyst that inspired the novel* Pontypool Changes Everything?**

I had a book of short stories coming out called *The Hellmouths of Bewdley*, and [the publisher] wanted to make it a two-book contract. I didn't have anything on the go at the time, and my wife and I went on this wandering car trip and passed through Pontypool. I looked at the word and thought it was a typo in the middle. I decided to play around with the idea of language being something that creates zombies. I thought of the idea of language being corrupt and distorting it, referring wrongly to things, and that generates a kind of madness that's sort of contagious and that evolved into a virus itself that's causing referential madness. And at that time there wasn't a lot of zombie material around, I wasn't a huge zombie fan, so I thought, "Hey, it's time for a good zombie story."

In the novel, I remember distinctly that the word "zombie" appears numerous times, but in the film I don't recall the word ever coming out.

No, and I've made this point before. In a zombie film, the word "zombie" is an audience word, not the film's word.



Georgina Reilly as Laurel-Ann Drummond

That's true; the characters don't call them "zombies."

Not unless it's a campy comedy like *Zombieland* or something like that, when they really are referring to zombie movies. In a George Romero film – at least the first couple – they don't say, "And there are zombies everywhere." We didn't want the film to be campy in that way and self-aware, but the book is clearly doing a whole bunch of other things with the word "zombie."



The idea of using language and communication as a means to spread this disease is really novel. What do you think it is about language that can make it frightening?

It's the primal idea that something as presumed or as commonplace as our ability to recognize each other, make contact with each other, be aware of each other and be aware of the world – that's a kind of technology, right? That language is a technology, and [without it] the world would disappear for us and we would be absolutely isolated and made mad. I like the idea that, the more familiar the environment is that gets disturbed, the more frightening it is, as opposed to something coming from outer space. It is literally that of which we are composed. Even the sound of yourself within yourself, and how you construct yourself, is a language technology.

I know first-hand how terrible it can be when someone finds they can't communicate like they did before. My father had a form of early onset Alzheimer's called Pick's disease. In his early 50s, he found that he could no longer communicate properly – all his words were gibberish and mumbled – and I can remember the frustration he had.

That's the terror of that. It's something so familiar that you presume that it's not made, that it's simply there, and you discover that it's made and can be unmade. A person can be unmade, and that's a terrifying idea, and what you're describing is absolutely that kind of thing.

How did director Bruce McDonald become involved?

I think my editor gave him a manuscript of *Pontypool* because he knew him. [Bruce] read it and apparently wanted to option it, but the first time I met him was at the launch of the book at the El Mocambo, back in '99 or '98. He showed up with a Kinder Egg and said it was a down payment on the option.

It took a long time for Pontypool to make the journey from book to film. Can you describe the process?

The film that we ended up making was a very short process, but before that it was nine or ten years of writing other scripts from the novel. The real challenge is that the book is extraordinarily non-linear, fragmentary and has no clear arc to sustain itself from beginning to end. Bruce and I resisted the idea that it had to become a conventional horror film, and that was one of the rea-





Stephen McHattie as Grant Mazzy

sons why we had to keep going back to the drawing board – we had to win over people who wanted it to be a fairly straightforward genre film. CBC radio contacted Bruce and said, "Do you have any scripts lying around that might make a good radio play?" So he called me up and said, "What do you think of turning *Pontypool* into a kind of *War of the Worlds*-type thing?" I said I'd give it a shot, so I wrote up a couple-page outline. We sent it to CBC and they said it was too violent. A couple months later they came back and said they liked the idea, so I wrote the script and we took a look at it and we were like, "We don't need a lot of money, we already have Stephen McHattie, we already have the cast, we have the script, all of this is being funded by the CBC. Why don't we just grab a camera and shoot this thing?" And then it grew into an actual production really quickly. The idea from the beginning was that you would not see anything. That changed a little by the time we got to production, [but] initially the idea was that all we were going to see was a guy at the desk, and that was going to be it.

I read that at first you were only going to film Stephen McHattie's face.

Yes, and it was a challenge I gave to myself: if I can create a kind of zombie siege that's compelling and real without ever leaving a person's face, then you know we win. We can decide how much to open up the frame – the room, the room upstairs, the windows to the outside? And that became a much-discussed part of making the film: how open is the frame going to be? We did shoot zombie hordes at one point, outside of the studio. It was a big shoot in the middle of June. It turned out that we had to keep it tighter because you would kind of inflate the tension a little bit, because one of the tensions is, "Is this really happening?" and "What does it really look like?"

Pontypool *garnered very positive reviews from critics and it did well at festivals such as TIFF, but it didn't do well at the box office. Was that upsetting?*

No, I think it was a problem film for the Canadian distributors because there's an opening box-office weekend model, and it's through that model that films die or succeed. We were never going to succeed in the opening weekend. A distributor couldn't really sell it as a straight-up zombie film and didn't quite yet know how audiences were going to react to it, so they put it in a few theatres with zero marketing. In the States it went a little bit better but it was rolled out differently – there was IFC and it was beginning to get a bit of a reputation. I don't mind that. I think it's a film that's still getting a reputation and it's getting around, it's popular in some strange places, [such as] Korea and Japan.

On the DVD commentary, you and Bruce talk about working on the sequels. Will they be based on other characters or other incidents in* Pontypool*?

Pontypool 2 happens simultaneously with *Pontypool 1*. *Pontypool 1* is in the radio station and *Pontypool 2* is the people listening to their radios and what happens in the town, so you actually hear parts of *Pontypool 1* on the radio. So yes, there's a complete other set of characters and a different drama all together.



FURTHER VIEWING

GRACE (2009)
STARRING JORDAN LADD, STEPHEN PARK AND GABRIELLE ROSE
DIRECTED BY PAUL SOLET

Madeline Matheson (Jordan Ladd) is eight months pregnant when she and her husband Michael are involved in a car accident. Michael is killed, but Madeline survives and is taken to the clinic of her midwife friend, Patricia (Samantha Ferris), where the unborn baby is pronounced dead. Despite this, the woman insists on carrying the baby to term, and weeks later she gives birth at home to a girl, whom she names Grace. The baby appears to be stillborn, but shortly afterward is discovered to be alive. Mistrustful of doctors, the woman refrains from taking the newborn to the hospital. But the baby – who gives off a foul odour and is developing a rash – cannot tolerate milk, and Madeline later realizes that Grace can only consume human blood. Adding to the dilemma is the woman's overbearing mother-in-law, Vivian (Gabrielle Rose), who wants to take Grace away in order to care for her herself.



SUCK (2009)
STARRING ROB STEFANIUK, JESSICA PARÉ AND MALCOLM MCDOWELL
DIRECTED BY ROB STEFANIUK

Joey (director Rob Stefaniuk) is the leader of a second-rate band called The Winners whose manager, Jeff (Dave Foley), has quit. One night during a gig, bassist Jennifer (Jessica Paré) attracts the attention of a vampire and goes off with him after the show. The next day, she doesn't meet the group, and they're forced to head out on the road without her. That night as they get ready for their gig, Jennifer shows up looking much paler than before, and stuns the audience with a magnetic performance. Her bandmates discover she's a vampire – and that she's been getting the band's roadie, Hugo (Chris Ratz), to dispose of bodies she's drained – but they turn a blind eye because she's made The Winners incredibly popular. Meanwhile, vampire hunter Eddie Van Helsing (Malcolm McDowell), who lost the love of his life because of a bloodsucker, is tracking down members of the group, whose number of vampires is rising. A fang-tastically entertaining comedy/horror/musical, *Suck* features numerous in-jokes and appearances from icons such as Alice Cooper, Henry Rollins, Iggy Pop, Carole Pope and Moby.



Haunter





VINCENZO NATALI

SINCE HIS FIRST FEATURE – THE 1997 SCIENCE-FICTION/HORROR-THEMED *CUBE* – WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Vincenzo Natali has emerged as one of Canada's most highly regarded genre filmmakers. Shot on an estimated budget of only $350,000, the film tells of a small group of people who wake up inside interconnected rooms equipped with such deadly devices as razor-sharp wire, blowtorches and acid sprays, and who must work together to escape their high-tech, booby-trapped prison. It positioned the then-28-year-old filmmaker as a talent to watch.

Following up *Cube* with directorial gigs on such television programs as *PSI Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal* and *Earth: Final Conflict*, Natali later helmed the 2002 sci-fi thriller *Cypher*, starring Jeremy Northam and Lucy Liu, and 2009's *Splice*, which features Sarah Polley and Adrien Brody as a pair of brilliant young geneticists who engineer a new lifeform from a combination of human and animal DNA. The resultant creation, whom they name Dren (Delphine Chaneac), displays human attributes such as wants, needs and the desire to be loved, but the non-human part of her genetic profile makes her unpredictable and ultimately dangerous.

More recent projects include the ghost story *Haunter* (2013), starring Abigail Breslin and Can-con icon Stephen McHattie (*Pontypool*), and a segment of the anthology *ABCs of Death 2* (2014). Natali has also worked as a storyboard artist on such films as the indie vampire flick *Blood & Donuts* (1995) and *Ginger Snaps* (2000).

What made you want to get into filmmaking?

I saw *Star Wars* when I was eight-years-old and that experience was as close to a religious experience that I ever had. From then onward I was totally infatuated with movies. So, you can blame George Lucas, but that's how it began. Initially I was more interested in visual effects and makeup effects and that sort of thing. But I developed an interest in actually directing movies when I was around eleven-years-old, and very little has changed. It was just a very slow, gradual evolution from that point forward.

How did you start out?

I come from a Super 8 background. And actually, a very close friend of mine, Andre Bijelic, who's my co-writer on *Cube*, was already making films. In some respects, I started because of him. And we started off very casually, just improvising things on the weekend. As we became adolescents, we actually started to take them very seriously to the point that we made one film every summer. We used to put a lot of work into those films.

Your first credits were as "storyboard cleanup artist" for various children's animated programs. What did that entail?

I had always loved animation and would always



Abigail Breslin as Lisa and Stephen McHattie as Pale Man in *Haunter*

draw. In my pre-*Star Wars* youth, I really wanted to be a comic book artist. And actually, I didn't give up on that idea entirely until much later, after I had gone to film school briefly and quit and quickly learned that making movies on 16mm outside film school was very expensive.

You quit film school?

Yes, Ryerson Polytechnical, after about a year and a half. I really enjoyed it, but I was really young and impatient and ambitious and I just wanted to move on. After leaving there I found myself in a situation where I had to earn a living. So I went to Nelvana, which was – and still is – a very well-established animation studio in Toronto. I had always admired them as a kid because they had done a number of holiday specials that were really interesting, really amazing. I went there just looking for a job and showed them my portfolio and I did a test for the storyboard department. It was a lucky break, because in addition to getting a paying job, it was educational and fun. It was almost like a second film school, because I started as an assistant but eventually I graduated to drawing storyboards. I really learned about classical narrative storytelling that way because in animation you are, of course, doing everything – you are blocking the action, you are breaking it down into shots. You're even cutting the scene on paper in advance of it being filmed. So I did that for five years and, at the same time, was able to save money and finance my own short films. Half of the year I would work at Nelvana doing boards, and they had a period where they would lay people off, so during the off-season period I would go and make a movie. From there, I made a couple of short films and eventually submitted them to the Canadian Film Centre, which is really like the Canadian equivalent of the American Film Institute, and I was accepted to their directing program. But none of that would have been possible without Nelvana.

So you moved into live-action storyboard work, and your first horror film doing this for was* Blood & Donuts *in 1995?

Well, before I went to Nelvana, I was actually doing storyboards for commercials sort of on a freelance basis and even on some movies as well. So this was all happening concurrently. I had my eye on the Canadian Film Centre and I really wanted to go there. And if you went to the Film Centre, it was encouraged for people to volunteer there. So I went in there and offered my services as a storyboard artist. And I, in fact, storyboarded John Fawcett's Canadian Film Centre short *Half Nelson*, which is a vampire film. That's how I met John. And how I met Steven Hoban, who has since become my producing partner. He produced John's short and he also produced *Blood & Donuts*.

And your second horror storyboard job was* Ginger Snaps *in 2000. Did you have any input into the designs of the creatures, or was it just for the general action?

No, I actually did do a bunch of designs for John but I think they rejected all of them. At this point, I think I had kind of moved on from storyboarding, but I was very close to John and to [*Ginger Snaps* co-writer] Karen Walton – who had written my short film, *Elevated*, at the Film Centre – and of course Steve, who was producing it. They had asked me if I was interested in doing the storyboards. And I thought this was going to be my swan song on storyboarding, and so I took the job. And I did do some very preliminary kind of designs for the warewolf. But I think that John very rightly went in a completely different direction. I saw some of [my designs] recently and thought, "Wow, those aren't very good." It's a good thing they didn't try to literally translate my drawings into a real creature, because I don't think it would have been frightening. They were a little too caricatured or abstract.

You made your first feature,* Cube, *in 1997. Could you tell me what inspired the film's storyline?

Primarily it was the very pragmatic need to make a feature film in one set. I knew that my first feature film would be made from a very low budget and I had to work within those physical constraints. But I really didn't want to tell a story which was set in one room, because I could only imagine it being something like *My Dinner With Andre*. Which, as wonderful a movie as that is, is not a movie I had within me. And so, I literally remember the moment where I sat down and thought, "Well, one set could be used to represent many." And this suggested in my mind a maze of identical rooms, and this would therefore be a symmetrical maze, and



Nicole de Boer as Leaven in *Cube*

therefore a cube. And therefore these cubes would be cells within a larger cube. And so it came to me all at once. But it took a number of years to take this very basic concept and make it into a three-act story, and it also took the help of my co-writers, André Bijelic and Graeme Manson. But I also had this idea where I thought it would be great to have this film where there was no introduction, where the characters are immediately dropped into this kind of hellish world. I was also very interested in creating a hell that was a far cry from anything that you would see in a Doré print or the classical vision of Hell. I wanted to do something that was very modernist in its construction. So it was really the fusion of those things.

And it gave you a reputation as a director.

Oh, yeah. It was luxurious to me, even with my meagre salary, to be able to fulfill my lifelong goal, which was to make a feature film and to make a movie that I was very passionate about. That's really been my goal all along and has been the case with every film I've made – it's only been done with the highest possible degree of passion. And in that way you can never lose, really. Regardless of even how the film turns out, when you're given the privilege to do something like that, it's a reward unto itself. What I've realized the longer I'm in this business is how rare that is. I mean, it's very unusual for someone to be allowed to do something that is entirely of their own design with complete creative freedom. I've been very fortunate.

Turning now to* Splice*, that film had a very long gestation period – something like twelve years. What was it about the story that kept you interested?

I think I was the sex. [Laughs] And I say that somewhat facetiously, but no, really. Because to me, that was the part of the movie that was breaking new ground. There have absolutely been stories like this before – there's been no shortage of science-fiction lore surrounding human and alien, or non-human couplings – but in movies, I think I've never really seen it treated in a very serious way.

You've said you were inspired to make* Splice *after learning of Dolly the sheep being cloned and also seeing a photo of the Vacanti Mouse with the ear-shaped growth on its back. Did you always intend to elicit sympathy for* Splice*'s Dren?

Oh, yeah, that was the idea from the very beginning as well as being inspired by that very famous photo of the Vacanti Mouse. I was first of all horrified by the image itself – it was a shocking, almost surrealistic image. But I was also very moved by it. I immediately empathized with the mouse. *Splice* began as a short story script I co-wrote with my writing partner [Antoinette Terry], and that was the whole premise: that there would be this hip young couple of scientists who are in a relationship having a conversation in one room, while in the next room there were these two kind of deformed experiments who are desperately trying to connect with each other from their individual cages. The title of it was *Mutants*. And the notion of it was, of course, that the humans were the mutations – they



Delphine Chaneac in *Splice*

were the aberrations, the monsters – and the creatures displayed much more humanity than their scientific counterparts. And that also really comes from *a* moment when, as a young child, I was fascinated by movie monsters and my dad one day said to me, "You know, the real monsters are humans." That left a very strong impression on me and I sort of held that [view] ever since.

When it came to the science in* Splice*, what measures did you take to try and make the film authentic? Did you have any input from scientists or geneticists when making the movie?

Oh, yeah, from the beginning, actually. I consulted with a geneticist and I was always amazed that whenever I would throw some outlandish idea out to him, he would say it was possible. And in some respects animal-human hybrids exist already. They don't look like Dren but they are a mixture of human and animal, so this is all very possible. I was always cognizant of the fact that the technology of what is in the movie was real and I was somewhat beholden to it, it was important that I try to make the science as real as possible and that there was no reason to exaggerate, actually.

Obviously, a film dealing with subject matter such as in* Splice *may generate controversy. Did you ever think the concept might be too out-there?

[Laughs] Well, *Splice*, on one hand, is *a* very conventional sort of movie. We've seen movies about science-going-wrong many, many times before. And we've seen monster movies many times before. But we haven't seen *a* lot of science-gone-wrong monster movies where the scientist has sex with the creation. And that was the point where all the potential financiers, all the potential studios I went to, generally balked at the idea of making this movie. But I didn't want to make the movie any other way. I always felt that if you took the sexual component out of it then there was nothing particularly special about that story. So that was the problem and has been the problem with all of my films. I mean, with *Cube*, I had a difficult time trying to convince people that a film shot all in one set could be cinematic, could be compelling and people wouldn't get bored with it. But that's a reason to do these films, and what makes it so exciting. It took a French company to greenlight *Splice* and I think that's just because, for the French, the notion of having intercourse with an animal-human hybrid wasn't all that weird. [Laughs]

So you eventually brought it to Sundance, where a rep of Joel Silver's saw it and liked it and picked it up for Dark Castle and Warner Bros. And as I understand, this was about a year or so after it was completed?

Yes, this movie has extracted its pound of flesh. [Laughs] It was very stressful on a number of different levels, and at a number of different stages in its development. Even after we had finished the movie – which was a small miracle that we were able to pull this thing off with the budget we had – even after that was done, we had finished it right in time for the economic collapse. It was the absolute worse time ever to sell a film to the domestic marketplace.

It's good you finished the movie before the eco-

nomic crash, otherwise who knows what would have happened?

Right. Because had we attempted to make the film even six months later, I think it would have been unfinanciable because of all the things that were going on within the international film community and the world economy at large. So by the time Sundance rolled around, I was pretty sure the film would go straight to DVD. Then, by some miracle, one of Joel Silver's executives saw the movie at Sundance, and decided to pick it up. It got a major release through Warner Bros. and, in fact, was the only film at Sundance to get a release on that scale. So it was a wonderful experience, but also very difficult.

Cube ***and*** **Cypher** ***gave you a name in Europe and Asia. Do you think*** **Splice** ***made you better known to audiences in Canada, and in North America?***

I don't really know how to quantify these things. But it's interesting to use Canada as a perfect example of this. With *Splice*, the movie was incredibly well reviewed. Probably more then it deserved. It really got excellent reviews in Canada. But every one of my other movies has been attacked, with the exception of a few critics out there who have been supportive. None of my movies before *Splice* had been particularly well received by Canadian critics. With *Splice*, that completely reversed, almost on an extreme level. And I think that's a classic scenario with filmmakers who really don't find acceptance in their own country and then have to kind of find it somewhere else first. And then when they come back, they are greeted with open arms.

Your next film after **Splice** ***was the ghost story*** **Haunter.** ***How did you become attached to that film?***

Desperation. I had two other projects, both science fiction, both based on important novels of the genre, and both of them stalled. While that drama was brewing, my friend Brian King – who wrote my second film, *Cypher* – was handing me drafts of a script that he wrote called *Haunter*. He was looking for creative feedback, not a director. Unfortunately for him, he got both!

Haunter ***is a departure from the science and technological themes you explored in your previous films. Was it difficult for you to work with supernatural-themed material?***

Science fiction, fantasy and horror are all part of the contemporary mythology. So while I acknowledge they do different things and often reach different audiences, they amount to the same thing, which is a metaphorical way of interpreting the very strange world we happen to find ourselves existing in at the dawn of the 21st century. So, fundamentally, it felt like a very comfortable fit. *Haunter* is a horror film that explores the ephemeral nature of time and reality. The main character, Lisa, is a teenage girl trapped in a time loop that her family is completely oblivious to. For them it's a happy suburban Sunday, for her it's purgatory. So it's a story about someone scratching through the veil of a perceived reality and finding a sinister truth about the way things really work. It's something that I think every teenager can relate to.

Did you encounter any difficulties with making the movie?

Every movie has its challenges, and this film was made at a juncture where genre film budgets plummeted. You can thank [producer] Jason Blum and *Insidious* for that one. They created a low-budget model that was so successful that no one in the world film market was willing to spend more than a few million to make a ghost movie. So I had to shoot a very elegant supernatural story on a very short timeline. Fortunately I had wonderful actors and crew to smooth over the rough patches. Still, I was reduced to shooting a lot of material in my tiny office with a Canon 7D prosumer camera. In the end I actually found those limitations liberating, and it was nice to get my hands dirty in a way I hadn't done since I was in my early twenties. I think that is the lesson that I learn time and again: movies and probably any form of art benefit from limitations.

Though it seems unlikely we will return to the prolific level of filmmaking experienced during the tax shelter days, what are your thoughts on the future of genre filmmaking here in Canada?

I feel that the Canadian psyche is very much attuned to horror. [Laughs] Because the fact of the matter is, we live in a very dark, cold, inhospitable climate and I think that a lot of horror is derived from that very kind of insular and introspective mindset. I always think that horror looks inward. So, I think that's totally in line with the national identity and psychology of Canada and Canadians. And I think that we're a generation who has come to appreciate the real value of genre cinema and horror specifically. I'm sure the next generation will feel that way to an even greater extent. So I predict that you're going to see more Canadian filmmakers and young Canadian filmmakers who are tying to make horror films. I think the future's bright.



CHAPTER 4



THE NEW WAVE OF CANADIAN HORROR (2010 - PRESENT)

IN RECENT YEARS, CANADA'S FILM SCENE HAS ENJOYED A RENEWED ENTHUSIASM FOR HORROR MOVIE PRODUCTION – due to a new generation of talented, committed filmmakers who are passionate about the genre.

The new Canadian horror film isn't easy to pigeonhole. The movies run the gamut from gore-soaked grindhouse throwbacks (Jason Eisener's *Hobo with a Shotgun*, Astron-6's *Father's Day*) and skin-crawling psychological thrillers (Jen and Sylvia Soska's *American Mary*), to arty, futuristic body horror (Brandon Cronenberg's *Antiviral*) and '80s-inspired creature features (Lowell Dean's *WolfCop*).

One thing that's particularly interesting about this new wave of Canadian horror is its geographic and cultural diversity. As Canuxploitation.com founder Paul Corupe has often pointed out, these films are being produced all across the country. While Canuck genre film production used to be largely confined to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, now there are also movies being lensed in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan (*WolfCop*), Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (*Hobo with a Shotgun*), and Winnipeg, Manitoba (*Father's Day*).

Some indie filmmakers have joined together to create their own production companies. The Collingwood, Ontario-based Foresight Features – which was formed in 2008 by John Geddes, Matt Wiele and Jesse T. Cook – has made a number of movies over the past few years, including *Monster Brawl* (2011), *Exit Humanity* (2011) and more recently, a trio of films scripted by *Pontypool* screenwriter Tony Burgess: *Septic Man* (2013), *Ejecta* (2014) and *Hellmouth* (2014). Black Fawn Films, which operates out of Guelph, Ontario under the direction of filmmaker Chad Archibald, has released a slew of horror films since it was founded in 2007, including *If a Tree Falls* (2010), *Antisocial* (2013) and *The Drownsman* (2014).

Rue Morgue Cinema, the filmmaking arm of *Rue Morgue* magazine, has also been active on the moviemaking front, with publisher Rodrigo Gudiño making his feature film directorial debut with the elegant ghost story *The Last Will and Testament of Rosalind Leigh* in 2012. Other recent Canuck horror releases include Derek Lee and Cliff Prowse's *Afflicted* (2013); *Rue Morgue* scribe Joseph O'Brien's Lovecraftian horror/crime thriller mashup *Devil's Mile* (2014); Jerome Sable's slasher musical *Stage Fright* (2014), actor David Hewlett's sci-fi/horror offering *Debug* (2014); and David Hayter's werewolf flick *Wolves* (2014).

Canada's horror renaissance is showing no signs of slowing down. With new Canuck genre filmmakers – and global fans of Canadian genre cinema – emerging daily, it's safe to say that the Great White North will be making many more maple-syrup shockers in the years to come.



HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN (2011)

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JASON EISENER

ONE OF THE MOST DELIRIOUSLY TWISTED FILMS TO EVER COME OUT OF CANADA, 2011's *Hobo with a Shotgun* is not a movie for all tastes. With its over-the-top gore gags, profanity-laden dialogue and complete disregard for cinematic taboos (in one scene, a villain uses a flame-thrower to roast a busload of children), the film has few equals.

Hobo's eponymous hero (Rutger Hauer) is a train-hopping vagabond searching for a place to call home. He arrives in the ironically named Hope Town, but his dreams of a new start are soon dashed when he witnesses a wave of violent crime, including a public decapitation carried out by a psychopathic kingpin called The Drake (Brian Downey) and his two bloodthirsty sons, Ivan (Nick Bateman) and Slick (Gregory Smith).

When the maniacal Slick tries to abduct a prostitute named Abby (Molly Dunsworth), the Hobo decides enough is enough. He subdues the younger man and delivers him to the authorities, only to find that the police chief is in cahoots with the crime lord. After the chief allows Slick and Ivan to carve the word "scum" into the Hobo's chest, Abby takes it upon herself to care for the older man.



Molly Dunsworth as Abby

The next day, the Hobo – who has earned money by reluctantly degrading himself for a video by a deviant filmmaker – goes to a pawn shop to purchase a lawnmower in a first step to starting his own grass-cutting business. When the shop is robbed by armed punks, he opts instead for a shotgun and proceeds to blast the thugs away.

Now a gun wielding vigilante, the Hobo sets out to clean up the streets of Hope Town – to the cheers of the residents and the chagrin of Drake and his sons. Eager to get him out of the way, the brothers torch a bus full of children as Drake gives the townsfolk an ultimatum, kill all of the homeless people or the rest of the town's children will die.

The film began as a faux movie trailer that director/editor Jason Eisener made with friends on the streets of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, to submit to a grindhouse trailer competition orchestrated by filmmaker Robert Rodriguez. Winning the top spot, Eisener's fake *Hobo* trailer was featured in Canadian screenings of Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's *Grindhouse* (2007) double feature. More importantly, Canadian distributor Alliance Films became interested in turning the concept into a feature film. Debuting at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2011, the action-horror-comedy would see theatrical and home video release later that year. Eisener has since followed up *Hobo* with segments of the horror anthologies *The ABCs of Death* (2012) and *V/H/S/2* (2013). He tells us how it kick-started his career.

***I understand the concept for* Hobo with a Shotgun *began when Robert Rodriguez put out a call for fake movie trailers to be featured in* Grindhouse.**
Yeah, we put it online and it started to go viral. That was very new to me, we had never put anything like that online before. And then I started seeing all the other entries and I thought, "There's no way in hell we'll ever win." I was thinking at the time that I would still make it into a feature. Then I got a call from the Weinstein [Company] executives and they're like, "We love the trailer. It's one of the top three. Why don't you come down to [see us]?" The two other trailers in the top three [were] *Maiden of Death* and *The Dead Won't Die*. They were fucking amazing. When Rodriguez announced the top one, we were there for it and I got to go up on a panel with him. We got invited to the premiere in LA for it. I got the call when we were in LA from Alliance in Canada and they said, "We want to make 200 prints of your trailer." They also wanted to talk about the idea of turning it into a feature film. So they brought us to Toronto to meet [producer] Niv Fichman from Rhombus Media, and we just hit it off. I went home to start the treatment and script.



Did you have to raise the money yourself?
They pretty much took care of it.

So you didn't have to go and pitch the idea?
No, I did. They would bring me out to help pitch it because, you know, in Canada there hadn't been this kind of film made in a very long time. It's a touchy subject when you go to talk to distributors and financial backers. People look down their noses at genre productions. There's still this stigma – there are still remnants of the tax shelter days of the '70s and the early '80s. Which is kind of unfair, because there were a lot of good films that came out [of that period]. So it was definitely tough. We spent a couple years getting money behind the project. We decided we needed to make a short film to show people what we wanted to do, because all we had was that trailer. It was only two minutes long, it didn't tell you exactly what the whole story was, it didn't show how we could handle a narrative film. So we made a short film call *Treevenge*, and that did really well on the festival circuit and ended up getting nominated for best short film at Sundance. It really helped us get a foot in the door.

***Tell me about a couple of challenges you encountered while making* Hobo.**
The biggest challenge was in preproduction. I'm first and foremost a film fan, and it was always my dream to make a feature film. You're always working towards that goal and when it starts to happen, you realize, "Holy shit, it's actually fucking happening. I've got to be a team leader. I have to direct one of my favourite actors, who has worked with some of my favourite directors in the world." It was scary.

The film had an amazing reception at Sundance. Tell me about that.
That was kind of scary too. We hadn't shown the film


Rutger Hauer as Tha Hobo



Assassins known as The Plague

to anybody, and it was the premiere of the movie. You hope for the best and you want everyone to love it. I remember I had so many butterflies in my stomach. And Rutger didn't know what to expect, either. He hadn't even seen the movie. So I'm with Rutger at Sundance, I've got my parents sitting in front of me and we brought, like, twenty friends from the crew. And then after the movie, it got this great reaction from the crowd. Rutger was super proud and stoked. I think it kind of took him off-guard. I think he thought the movie was going to be really silly and over-the-top the whole time, and he didn't realize that I wanted there to be some nice serious moments in there as well. He really appreciated that. My mom looked back at me and she gave me that look that I got when I was a kid when I was in trouble. She was pretty shocked. She had raised me to go to church every Sunday. It was a pretty strong Catholic upbringing. She calmed down afterward and then she saw the movie again and absolutely loved it. The scariest part there was a press screening. The filmmakers were not allowed at the press screening, so you can't introduce the movie, you can't charm the critics. So we all went to a restaurant and had our phones open for Twitter, waiting for them to walk out of the screening. The reaction was good, and then it went nuts! It was such an awesome feeling.

The film has a really distinct look with its garish, over-the-top colour palette. What inspired that?

It comes from a bunch of stuff. Mostly being a kid of the '80s and growing up with '80s cartoons, like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Ghostbusters*. Those shows had such crazy colour combinations because I think they wanted to grab children's attention. And the same with WWF wrestling. It also came from a lot of films like Dario Argento's work and how he played with colour in *Suspiria*, George Romero's *Creepshow* and stuff like that. *The Warriors* is my favourite movie of all time, and I love the colours in that movie. So it was this whole amalgamation of my childhood.

Your film and Astron-6's* Father's Day *are part of a resurgence of Canadian genre films. Do you think it will last?

Yeah, I think all the films that get made in Canada are through government funding bodies like Telefilm. They're seeing that there's this new generation that grew up on genre films and wants to make them. Making something like *Hobo*, it took a couple of years to get it going and convince people there's an audience for it. With how well the trailer did online and how well *Treevenge* did, we were able to show them that there's an audience in Canada for this stuff.

FURTHER VIEWING

MONSTER BRAWL (2011)
STARRING DAVE FOLEY, ART HINDLE AND ROBERT MAILLET
DIRECTED BY JESSE THOMAS COOK

Eight monsters – the Frankenstein monster, a female vampire, a werewolf, a witch, a mummy, a zombie, a Cyclops and a swamp creature – battle it out in a series of graveyard wrestling matches. Short bio segments are featured for each monster, ringside commentary is supplied by Sasquatch Sid Tucker (Art Hindle) and Buzz Chambers (Dave Foley), and Lance Henriksen provides voiceover during matches. Wrestling fans will appreciate appearances by Jimmy Hart and Kevin Nash.

ANTISOCIAL (2013)
STARRING MICHELLE MYLETT, CODY THOMPSON AND ADAM CHRISTIE
DIRECTED BY CODY CALAHAN

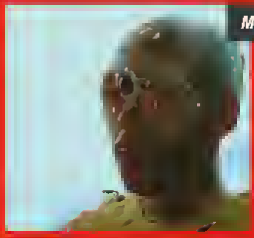
It's December 31st and criminology student Sam (Michelle Mylett) accepts an invitation to a New Year's bash thrown by a friend and his housemates. Once at the party, reports start coming in of students killing other students on university grounds, and soon it's announced that a virus may be behind a sudden rash of murderous attacks taking place in other parts of the world. The group barricades itself indoors, but later realizes that those inside the house – particularly those who recently visited a popular social networking site – may already be infected.

HELLMOUTH (2014)
STARRING STEPHEN MCHATTIE, SIOBHAN MURPHY AND BOYD BANKS
DIRECTED BY JOHN GEDDES

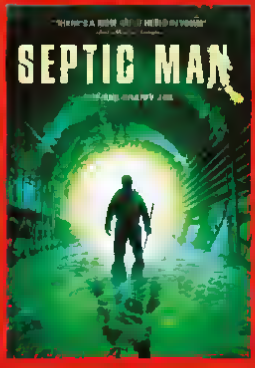
Charlie (Stephen McHattie) is a terminally ill and soon-to-retire graveyard caretaker. Just before he can hand in his keys, he receives a visit from his boss; it appears the caretaker of another cemetery has gone AWOL and Charlie will have to replace him for six months or lose his pension. Charlie makes his way to his new post, where he must contend with escaped convicts, demons and more. *Hellmouth* features a stylized, predominantly black-and-white aesthetic with plenty of computer animation à la *Sin City*.

SEPTIC MAN (2013)
STARRING MOLLY DUNSWORTH AND JULIAN RICHINGS
DIRECTED BY JESSE T. COOK

The town of Collingwood is experiencing a crisis: people are falling ill and dying from contaminated water. Jack (Jason David Brown), a sewage worker, is contacted by a mysterious man, Phil Prosser (Julian Richings) and offered $200,000 if he will stay in town after a quarantine to find out the source of the contagion. Against the wishes of his wife Shelley (Molly Dunsworth), Jack remains behind and goes to the town's water treatment facility, where he becomes trapped inside a septic tank. His escape is hindered by a large, dim-witted man and his psychopathic, chainsaw-wielding brother. Meanwhile, Jack begins to transform into a hideous mutant.



Monster Brawl



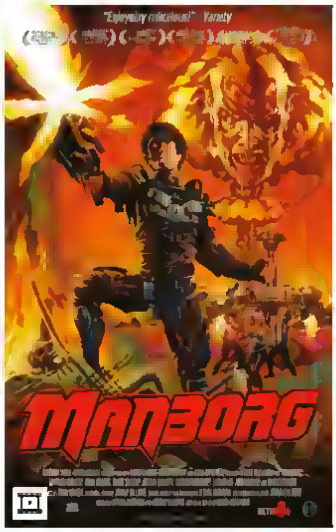


ASTRON-6

INTERVIEW WITH ADAM BROOKS AND STEVE KOSTANSKI

DEMENTED. DEPRAVED. DELIRIOUS. DISTURBED. DEBAUCHED. These are just a few of the apt terms one could use to describe the output of five-man Canadian filmmaking collective Astron-6, which includes such off-the-wall offerings as *Father's Day*, *Manborg* (both 2011), and the recently released *The Editor*.

The group – which is composed of filmmakers Adam Brooks, Matthew Kennedy, Conor Sweeney, Steve Kostanski and Jeremy Gillespie – has been working together since 2007, when they began pooling their resources to make faux film trailers and no-budget shorts. They include *Inferno of the Dead* – which sees a young couple attract a quartet of Italian-styled zombies who, instead of eating them, want to hang around them day and night – and *H.I.Z. (Erection Der Zombi)*, about a camp counselor who contracts and transmits an STD-like virus that turns his friends into randy, flesh-eating zombies. Next up was the Kostanski-directed sci-fi/actioner *Manborg*, followed by the full-length horror-comedy *Father's Day*.



A twisted and gory yet uproariously funny homage to '70s grindhouse horror and '80s direct-to-video flicks, *Father's Day* sees a teen prostitute named Twink (Sweeney) unjustly under suspicion for the murder of his father. Tasked with taking care of the young man is a youthful priest, Father Sullivan (Kennedy), who learns that a portly, bespectacled individual named Chris Fuchman (Mackenzie Murdock) is targeting fathers in a series of brutal rapes and murders. It's up to the holy man to track down a gun-toting, one-eyed badass known as Ahab (Brooks) and his stripper sister Chelsea (Amy Groening), whose father was also molested and murdered, and who are the only ones who can help Sullivan and Twink end Fuchman's reign of terror.

After that, Astron-6 turned its collective eye toward *The Editor*, which made its world debut at the 2014 Toronto International Film Festival. A bloody, hilarious homage to classic '70s giallo flicks, *The Editor* has Brooks (who co-directed with Kennedy) starring as Rey Ciso, a formerly prestigious film editor whose career



Astron-6 (L to R): Matthew Kennedy, Conor Sweeney, Adam Brooks, Jeremy Gillespie and Steve Kostanski

took a nosedive after he lost several fingers in an editing mishap. Now forced to wear wooden fingers, Ciso – who supposedly spent some time in a mental hospital following his accident – finds himself a suspect in a series of murders involving the cast and crew of the horror opus he's editing.

In addition to Kennedy as a police detective and Sweeney as an untalented leading man, the cast includes Paz de la Huerta, Tristan Risk, Laurence R Harvey and genre legend Udo Kier. A giallo in its own right, the film even features badly dubbed English dialogue and a fantastic synth soundtrack, including music by the legendary Claudio Simonetti (*Deep Red*, *Suspiria*, *Demons*).

Kostanski and Brooks explain how Astron-6 gets so much bang for its budgets.

How was Astron-6 formed?

Steve Kostanski: All of our movies played at this one short film festival – the Winnipeg Short Film Massacre, which would happen every October. We would make these horror shorts and submit them and we were technically competing with each other. I had known Adam through a mutual friend. Jeremy co-ran the festival with his girlfriend, Jenn. And Matt and Conor would submit movies. We were living in Winnipeg back then. Adam and Jeremy came up with this fantasy hero idea called *Goreblade* and it was supposed to be this throwback to *Conan the Barbarian* and '80s fantasy movies. And when we started this *Goreblade* series of shorts, we looped in Matt and Conor as well, and that's kind of how the five of us started working together – on this one series of shorts.

Where did the name Astron-6 come from?

SK: While doing [the *Goreblade* shorts], they wanted to kind of build a mythos around it, so they came up with the name of this fake VHS releasing company, Astron-6, which would essentially be a mix of Vestron and Astral. They came up with this cheesy logo and put it before the *Goreblade* shorts, and we all liked it so much that for every short we made after that we would all put the Astron-6 logo on before it. We just decided to all keep working under this banner because it was kind of funny – that we were like a video company making these knock-off parody/comedy-horror movies.

What was the impetus for* Father's Day*?

SK: Matt and Conor came up with this idea for a short about a guy who rapes dads, and so we started making this faux grindhouse trailer. Adam played Ahab and it was kind of the same premise as the movie, condensed into a trailer. We tried to submit it to a film festival in Winnipeg but it got rejected because it was too lurid.

And because of the subject matter?

SK: Yeah, because of the subject matter and everything else, pretty much. But it caught the attention of Lloyd [Kaufman] at Troma. Originally, they pitched giving us a budget of $5000 to make the feature, and Adam managed to talk them up to $10,000. We decided to go ahead and make the movie based off of that.

Okay so, for $10,000, I would assume that basically you guys were doing almost everything?

SK: Oh yeah. Well, for my effects budget, I think I got about $1200 out of that to do an entire movie's worth of effects. So the creatures, the Hell sequence at the end, all the monster stuff, all the gore – I had nothing to work with. And I was building everything in Toronto at the time. It was hard to coordinate what was going on.

I understand that the making of* Father's Day *did not go entirely smoothly. What were one or two of the bigger challenges?

SK: For Adam, I know that when dealing with Troma, he unfortunately was the one that had to bear that cross. In terms of talking to Lloyd. I mean, even just getting the money was a hassle for him. So it was



Mackenzie Murdock as Chris Fuchman in *Father's Day*.



stressful for him to try and coordinate everything and to be the one dealing with Troma directly, who were not the most helpful in getting the movie made. Lloyd gave us a lot of horrible notes on things that he wanted to have happen in the movie that were typical Troma stuff that really didn't fit.

Adam Brooks: Everything is a challenge when you're trying to make an effects-heavy exploitation film for $10,000. Setting myself on fire and falling off a moving truck was challenging. Dealing with the city's threats to shut us down was challenging, too. But I guess the most obvious challenge was taking notes and abuse from an old man and his dying company.

Were you injured during the making of the film?

AB: I went into the car stunts thinking, "Pain is temporary. Film is forever." A fun fact about getting older, though, is finding out all injuries are permanent injuries. I hurt my hip pretty badly falling off the moving truck onto a gravel road. I did five takes and could barely walk. My hip and half my upper leg turned black and purple for a while. Eventually the pain went away, but every now and then when I just bump into something I get that old, dull ache back.

Did you follow Kaufman's notes?

SK: No, no. Well, we shot joke versions but we never put them in because, for that amount of money, there was no point in trying to accommodate them in anything. Because they were not very accommodating to the movie.

Did Kaufman have a deadline for you to finish the film?

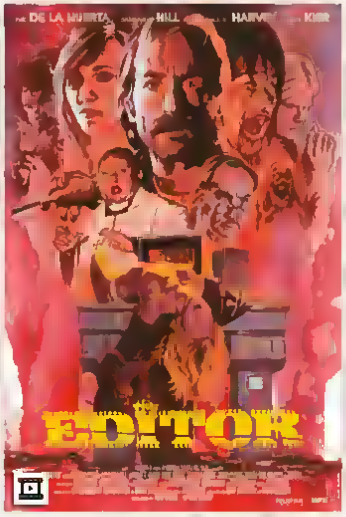
SK: Yeah, it was supposed to be delivered by a year

"EVERYTHING IS A CHALLENGE WHEN YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE AN EFFECTS-HEAVY EXPLOITATION FILM FOR $10,000."

[from] when we decided to do it. And of course, in Winnipeg, five, six months of the year is some of the worst weather conditions. We had to plan and get as much of our outdoor shooting [as possible] done before [it got too cold]. There was not a lot of time to pull it off.

Were you guys working at other jobs while making the movie?

SK: Well, Matt and Conor were in Vancouver. Matt was going to university. I had just moved out here [to Toronto], so I was jumping between a few shops trying to get work in effects. So we were all trying to make a living while making this movie at the same time. It came down to trying to coordinate everything. It's difficult when you have five people with totally different lives trying to pull off this one project.



Your new film is* The Editor. *How did that project start out?

AB: It began sometime in the post-production of *Father's Day*. I was stressed out and came up with the idea of a movie about a film editor and some really dumb taglines like, "He'll leave you on the cutting room floor." I told Matt about it, and Matt started improvising dialogue in the stilted cadence of one of Fulci's later films. This was of course hilarious to me, and we agreed it would be fun to maybe make a trailer for this non-existent giallo film someday. Then Dave Alexander of *Rue Morgue* approached me to be part of his art show [If They Came from Within] about Canadian movies that never existed. Matt and I wrote out a little synopsis for the art show and we chose [former *RM* art director] Justin Erickson to make our poster. Anyway, months later I was getting the itch to shoot something again. I convinced Matt we should get to work on that fake trailer – after all, we already had an awesome poster. So we started shooting a little trailer and quickly realized it's just about as much work to make a feature as it is to make a trailer, so maybe we should write a feature script. We wrote a script and tried to tie in the gibberish that we'd already shot. Then we applied for some funding from Telefilm on a whim and got it. At that point we figured we should step up our game instead of making another movie that looks just like *Father's Day*. So we started shooting all over again on RED camera.

Was it any easier than doing* Father's Day*?

AB: It was harder, but for different reasons. Believe me, I am grateful we had no megalomaniacs telling us what to do. But yeah, it was harder because this time it all rested on myself and Matt, and suddenly we had a little bit of money to deal with and no experience hiring people or dealing with any kind of crew outside of Astron-6.

How difficult was it securing genre icon Udo Kier? How did he react to the script?

AB: I sent him the script directly, and after that it wasn't too difficult to get him. He likes to do projects that are weird, different or unique in some way, and he likes working with young filmmakers who haven't given up on all their dreams yet. He is the consummate professional and almost as funny as he is charming and thoughtful. Our biggest mistake was not casting him in a larger role.

Are there any other projects in the pipeline for Astron-6?

AB: There's really nothing at this moment. We have a script or two that we are proud of, and a lot of ideas, but everything comes down to money and I'm $20,000 in the hole.

(2012)

ANTIVIRAL

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR BRANDON CRONENBERG

IN A NOT-SO-DISTANT FUTURE, CELEBRITY WORSHIP HAS REACHED SUCH A frenzied state that high-end clinics exist to inject people with diseases harvested from the most popular of public figures – allowing them to experience the same illness afflicting their favourite idol. Stone-faced Syd March (Caleb Landry Jones) works for the Lucas Clinic, a centre where clients can choose from a selection of "designer viruses." To earn some extra cash, the young man has been smuggling out the copyright-protected viruses from the heavily secured facility by administering the infectious agents into his own body and later re-selling them on the black market.

When he's sent to collect a sample of the illness that has stricken beautiful young starlet Hannah Geist (Sarah Gadon), he also injects himself with the same disease. But this is no ordinary cold sore or flu, and after Syd awakens from a feverish incubation period, he discovers that not only has Geist reportedly succumbed to her malady, but no one knows what she died from. In an attempt to save his own life, Syd searches for a cure for the disease he now has, but individuals who have learned of his activities also want to profit by forcibly harvesting the pathogens from him.



The debut feature from Brandon Cronenberg, *Antiviral* is a film that may initially seem to cover ground seen in the works of his father, David Cronenberg. But a closer look with Brandon beyond the body horror aspects reveals that *Antiviral* is indeed its own animal, presenting some intriguing views on our current celebrity-fixated culture.

Where did the concept for Antiviral come from? Was there a specific impetus for the storyline or the film?

I was sick with a flu in my first year at film school, and during a semi-conscious fever dream I began obsessing over the physicality of illness – how I had something inside my body that had come from someone else's body, and how there was a kind of intimacy to that. I tried afterwards to think of a character who might see disease in an intimate way, and I decided maybe a celebrity-obsessed fan would want to catch, say, Angelina Jolie's cold as a way of feeling physically connected to her. That idea developed into what I thought was an interesting metaphor to use for discussing celebrity culture.

A 2008 short film you made,* Broken Tulips, *deals with some of the themes featured in* Antiviral. *Can you tell me a little bit about how that short came to be?

I started writing *Antiviral* in 2004. In 2008 I needed to



Caleb Landry Jones as Syd March

make a short for my senior year of film school, so I took a scene from the feature script and restructured it into a contained film that communicated the feature's basic ideas. I then had to more or less re-shoot the short as part of making the feature, which was a weird experience. One actress actually played the same role in both films.

The film has an unusual, almost sterile, clinical look in many scenes, particularly with the stark white walls, the white clothing and so on. Was there any meaning behind this?

There were a few reasons for the aesthetic. First, I thought it would be an interesting way to control the viewer's eye. When you have a mostly white frame, the eye is drawn to things that aren't white, and those things gain a special significance. So for instance, the celebrity faces on the white walls of the clinic have extra weight to them, the tulips have more weight, etc. Also, blood really pops against a white background, and blood was significant to the narrative. Finally, one theme in the film is the relationship between celebrities as social constructs, as deities who exist purely in the cultural consciousness, and then the flesh and blood human beings behind those constructs who are in a sense unrelated. And this was in part represented by the fact that the film has both these very sterile, inhuman elements, and then some extremely bodily elements, and those things collide at the end.

In the film, fans are able to obtain meat grown from the cells of their favourite celebrities, in effect making them the ultimate consumers of their idols' products. Where did this idea come from?

I was reading about the development of lab-grown meat, which is a real thing. At the moment they are developing steaks made from the muscle cells of cows, which some people hope will eventually replace traditional farming. But meat made from human cells then seems like an inevitability, and of course celebrity meat would be the most desirable of the human meats. After the film came out, someone actually put up a website saying they were a company with plans to make grown meat from celebrities. I'm assuming it was a joke, although it got a fair bit of media attention.

Because of its body horror elements, have you found people comparing Antiviral to your father's films? And if so, what do you say to those who compare your work with his?

Some people have compared it to my father's films. Then again, back when I was trying to be a visual artist, there were people who compared my drawings and paintings to my father's films. I think that's just inevitable. Ultimately *Antiviral* is an honest expression of my thoughts and creative impulses, and how people went to position it in relation to my father's work isn't very important to me.

How does your father feel about your career thus far? Is he happy for you, or did he try to dissuade you in any way from entering the film industry?

He seems happy for me, although you'll have to ask him.

Do you have plans to continue working in the horror genre? And if so, do you have any projects you are or will be working on?

I don't generally think about genre when I'm working, and I'm not actively trying to define myself as a horror director. That said, I think the project I'm currently working on counts as horror.



(2012)

AMERICAN MARY

INTERVIEW WITH FILMMAKERS JEN AND SYLVIA SOSKA

WHILE THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF WOMEN IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA IN HORROR FILMS, BEHIND IT is another story. Genre filmmaking is still male-dominated, but there are a handful of women who are making strides to change that. Among them are Vancouver-born sisters Jen and Sylvia Soska.

The identical twins, who founded their own company, Twisted Twins Productions, made a name for themselves with their first feature film, the 2009 DIY flick *Dead Hooker in a Trunk*, which was produced on a micro budget of only $25,000. The film, in which two sisters (played by the Soskas) and their friends discover a prostitute's corpse in the trunk of their car and try to find a way to dispose of the body, earned kudos from many horror and exploitation fans for its off-the-wall gore and warped sense of humour.

Their follow-up feature, the Vancouver-shot *American Mary*, was a remarkable departure from its predecessor, not only in terms of its greatly increased budget and slick production values, but also in its emotional depth. The film stars Katharine Isabelle (the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy) as Mary Mason, a dedicated medical student who, according to her instructor Dr. Allan Grant (David Lovgren), has a very promising future in medicine. Struggling to pay her bills, Mary is forced to apply for a job as a dancer in a seedy strip bar. Soon afterward, the aspiring surgeon is offered $5,000 by bar owner Billy Barker (Antonio Cupo) to treat a severely injured man.



Later, Mary is contacted by fellow dancer Beatress Johnson (Tristan Risk, *The Editor*), who has been surgically altered to resemble Betty Boop. After learning of Mary's medical training, Beatress inquires whether Mary would be interested in performing some extreme body modifications on a friend. Invited to a party where several doctors – including Dr. Grant – will be in attendance, Mary accepts and shows up, but her faith in her mentor is shattered when Grant drugs and rapes her. Mary drops out of medical school but is determined to have her revenge. She arranges for Barker and his associate to kidnap the not-so-good doctor so she can practice her surgical skills on him.

Garnering positive reviews and a cult following for *American Mary*, the Soska sisters went on to helm *See No Evil 2* and *Vendetta* with WWE Studios, and to write and direct a segment of the anthology *The ABCs of Death 2*.

Have you always been horror fans? What made you want to go out and make horror films?

Sylvia Soska: I don't remember a time when we weren't fascinated with fear and scaring people. One of my earliest memories is Jen and I collecting spiders. There was a family barbecue and I found a big one and I was super-excited,

so I went over to show everybody. I remember it as a POV holding it up and showing it to all these adults and them running off and screaming. I remember really liking that feeling. I think it ballooned after that.

Jen Soska: I was drawn to horror more the other way around, because our parents were very encouraging when it came to us liking the things we liked. Our mom had this massive Stephen King collection and I wanted to read the books that my mom was reading. It never occurred to me that they were horror books. They were just really fucking cool stories with horrific elements. And that's kind of the way we try to make our films, too – really cool stories with fucked-up elements. I thought of *Dead Hooker in a Trunk* as a comedy and *American Mary* as a drama.

Sylvia: I thought *American Mary* was a romantic comedy. Probably why I'm single.



Katharine Isabelle as Mary

"I THOUGHT *AMERICAN MARY* WAS A ROMANTIC COMEDY. PROBABLY WHY I'M SINGLE."

Was there a particular person or event that inspired American Mary?

Sylvia: Yes, an April Fool's prank on BME.com [Body Modification eZine], where these two identical twins had this "surgery diary." One twin had his arm removed and grafted onto his brother's chest, and the other one had his ring finger removed and grafted onto his brother's ring finger. There was this love letter that said, "Only an identical twin would understand why you would want to do this." It hit home. It was scary and my mom always taught me that if you're scared of something, it means you have a lack of education, so learn more about it. So I stayed on that site's message boards a lot and I would pretend I had a sub-incised penis that was infected or I wanted to do this or that. They were very nice and answered all my questions until one day I said, "Hey, I'm doing this for a potential movie," and then, poof, gone. I thought, "Oh, I've fucked this up so badly." Luckily we got a real flesh artist to consult, Russ Foxx, so we had an authentic source into that world.

Jen: We've never been mainstream. We seem generally well liked right now for the things that we got beaten up for in high school. We've always stood up for the people that were seen as outcasts, and I absolutely hate how the body modification community is treated. You look at people with plastic surgery, even extreme plastic surgery, and that is generally accepted because they fit in with the North American ideal of what is beautiful. Whereas you take these mods and they're merely fitting in with their own sense of individuality and what makes them feel comfortable and happy, but they're called freaks, and I hate that because it comes from a lack of understanding. Being identical twins, we've always been looked at as a walking punch line – we're freaks, so something we have in common with the body mod community is that people look at us and jump to conclusions. So many times I've had meetings and someone will say, "Wow, I thought you were just kind of a dumb whore."

Sylvia: [laughs] They don't say "dumb whore"!

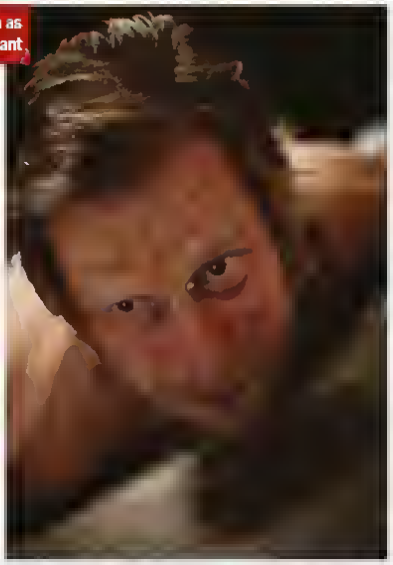
Jen: No, but they imply it. They don't think I'm very smart and that I spend half my time just powdering my face – which I do, but only because I'm always on camera. But still, it's very important for us to bring out that message. Like the tagline for *Mary*, "Appearances are everything." In the film, we see that the people who look normal aren't the normal ones and the people that [look] weird aren't really weird.

How difficult was it to get Katherine into that very dark place that she goes to in the film, particularly after her character is assaulted?

Sylvia: Here's the funny thing: that was her third rape scene! She did three films – two others, then *American Mary* – and she got raped in every single one of them. So when she knew there was a rape scene, she was like, "Aw, another one?" She starts describing [her role in another movie], how she's tied up and raped, she gets knocked up and her kid gets killed. I was like, "What the fuck? No, this is different!" Katharine was so amazing. She was so involved in making this a very real experience, because it's not just on film. We live in a culture where we talk to people who have been or know someone who has been raped, so there's a responsibility to do it in a proper way. As well as being a physical rape, it's a rape of ethics because this was the world that Mary wanted to go into, and that was the final straw. Everything she wanted was taken away from her. The funny thing is that with her professor, she kind of had a crush on him and he turns out to be this



Tristan Risk as Beatress



David Lougren as Dr. Allan Grant

"IT'S A REAL STRUGGLE TO MAKE A FILM LIKE *AMERICAN MARY*, BECAUSE THERE'S NO OTHER FILM LIKE IT."

seething dirtbag. Something good could have happened but he fucked that up, and now he's just a stump!

Jen: Katie's such a professional. She's making jokes before the scene and then, during the shooting of the scene, it was a very disturbing, sick tone and she can drop in and out of it so easily. Actually, it was David Lovgren whom I had to comfort between takes because he was upset. He's a very nice guy and to do that was very uncomfortable for him. He had never done anything like that and he said, "That's the worst thing I could ever be asked to do in a film." He had enough trust to do that with us.

How difficult was it to get the film made?

Sylvia: First of all, nobody wanted to give us money. We went around for two years and everyone said no. We just kept going from meeting to meeting and on [our] 29th birthday, we're having cake at our family's home. My parents are kind of quiet, acting kind of weird and they say, "You know, girls, you've been trying really hard for this. We're going to re-mortgage our house." And this was huge, because we've never had money and they said they were going to be the first investors, because they really wanted to see us make this movie. After that, more investors that came onboard. I've always used my own money, but my parents' money is way more precious than mine. So I'm very grateful that the movie has seen the success that it has.

Jen: It's a real struggle to make a film like *American Mary* because there's no other film like it. *Legally Blonde* is almost the comedic, light version of *Mary* but *Mary*'s a film where body modification takes centre stage and it's about women's struggles in a male-dominated industry, which is very much an analogy for our own experiences in the film industry. There was such a struggle with the people that we were making it with, where they wanted to make it something general that everyone could accept. We kept arguing, 'No, this is for the outcasts. This is for the people that *need* to see the movie.' If you try to make something for everybody, it ends up being for nobody.

How important is it to have strong female characters like Mary in contemporary horror cinema?

Sylvia: Insanely important – more important than I realized at the time. A lot of personal stuff went in there. It's sometimes difficult to watch the movie because it's so reflective of harder times. But I've been so blessed to travel the world with Jen and meet people who tell me how I changed their life, how Mary changed their life, how that character gave them strength. And then I think about all the strong female characters that I watched and how they gave me strength and they made me want to be stronger. It's a very cool thing to have out there, especially since there are so few female role models out there. I hate that we need that, because I don't want to be that kind of person but we have to, or nothing's ever going to fucking change.

Jen: It's so funny to me that people say that horror is a misogynist genre, because the Final Girl archetype is such a beacon of strength for women – not only for people behind the camera or in front of it, but [for people] watching it. It started with Laurie Strode [in *Halloween*], then with Ellen Ripley where it took on this huge twist where the Final Girl wasn't this scared little wait – she was this ass-kicker. I saw *Alien* when I was very young, and I was watching it with my mom, and she told me, "Don't worry. Ripley always wins." Mom doesn't even remember saying that to me, but it changed my life.

BLACK FAWN FILMS

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER CHAD ARCHIBALD

SINCE IT WAS LAUNCHED IN 2008, THE GUELPH, ONTARIO-BASED BLACK FAWN FILMS HAS BEEN MAKING MOVIES AT A BREAKNECK PACE. Their filmography includes Cody Calahan's 2013 neo-zombie flick *Antisocial* and the 2014 supernatural horror thriller *The Drownsman*, helmed by Black Fawn principal Chad Archibald. The company recently inked an ambitious deal with Breakthrough Entertainment to produce eight films over the course of two years. Archibald explains how they do it.

How did you come to form Black Fawn Films, and why specialize in horror?

We grew up loving horror films and just fell into it. We slowly realized that horror doesn't need huge names to sell. It's about the concepts, the thrills and the scares. It's a world that doesn't have to be realistic. If we want a social media site to turn everyone into zombies [as in *Antisocial*] we can do that. We realized that we're not too bad at making horror films, so we've stuck with it. In the future we will be opening our doors to other genres.

What are the main problems you face as an indie production company?

Funds are always a struggle, but since we've signed on with Breakthrough our biggest challenge has been gathering content for these eight films we have slated over the next two years. We have a fairly low budget range, and we have to find scripts that are high-concept that we can do for these budgets. We aren't interested in just pumping out films. We want this slate to be diverse and full of intense, intriguing, unique and creative concepts. [We've] been through hundreds of treatments to find just the first few concepts on the slate.

Where do you get the concepts for projects such as* Antisocial *or* The Drownsman*?

Antisocial started as, "What if a social media site turned all of its users into zombies?" *The Drownsman* came from us wanting to do a throwback film that brought back the concept of iconic supernatural villains. We started by asking, "What scared us when we were kids?" I was always terrified of drowning, so we started there: a supernatural villain that drowns people.

How have audiences reacted to your films so far?

It's been amazing to see people who have followed our company from the start, and how dedicated they are to horror and to supporting Canadian independent artists. We've traveled from Montreal to Taiwan screening our films, and the feedback has been amazing. We like to think we are making the best [movies] we can with our small budgets, so as long as people keep watching them, we'll keep making them!



RUE MORGUE CINEMA

INTERVIEW WITH RODRIGO GUDIÑO

WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RUE MORGUE CINEMA, *RM* FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER RODRIGO GUDIÑO branched out beyond the world of print into the realm of filmmaking. His first directorial effort was the 2006 short film *The Eyes of Edward James*, about a man who undergoes hypnotherapy to unlock repressed memories of the night his wife was murdered. Gudiño followed this up with another short, *The Demonology of Desire* (2007), a twisted tale of a disturbed girl whose desire to be loved goes in some very dark directions. The following year, he teamed up with Vincent Marcone (of the band Johnny Hollow) to co-direct a third short titled *The Facts In the Case of Mister Hollow*, which centres on a chilling photograph.



Gudiño then made his feature debut with 2012's *The Last Will and Testament of Rosalind Leigh*. The film tells of a young man, Leon (Aaron Poole), who returns to his childhood home after the death of his estranged and devoutly religious mother, Rosalind (Vanessa Redgrave in a voice-over role). Once in the house – which is filled with unusual antiques – Leon begins to experience strange and increasingly terrifying occurrences, including visions of bizarre twins the Rahn Brothers (Julian Richings), and comes to the realization that his mother may be trying to communicate with him from beyond the grave.

Was it always your intention to become a filmmaker?

It was always one of my intentions, yes. When I first launched *Rue Morgue* back in 1997, I jokingly used to say that I did it as a way to ease myself into making movies. The truth is, I was only half joking.

How did writing and editing pieces on Canadian genre film, and working on the magazine in general, affect your approach to making* The Last Will and Testament of Rosalind Leigh*?

You could say that *Rue Morgue* was my film school in that I was able to learn from the mistakes of others, specifically the filmmakers whom I have always admired and who were very candid with me over the years about their struggles and challenges making movies. I also learned the back end of the business, how the finances work, pitching, development and production, so it gave me some insight into those worlds that proved to be quite valuable in the long run.

The film takes place in the home of Rosalind Leigh, which houses a number of unusual antiques. How did that location shape the movie?

When I first started writing the film, I told my producer that I needed to find the main location because the way the camera tells the story is very precise, and of course



Aaron Poole as Leon

all this had to be in the script. It wasn't long before we found the house, which is pretty much as you see it in the movie except that I added the angel statues and the cross-stitched messages on the walls. We moved things around, changed furniture, added walls and basically shot the movie in a way that would suggest the house is different geographically – for example, there is no chapel underneath the mother's bedroom. But a lot of it was there already and, inspired by the bric-a-brac, I added the plot point that Leon is a collector of antiques and that his mother purchased everything he had ever sold over the years. It seemed to work hauntingly well with the story I was telling.

How does the film represent your sensibilities as a filmmaker?

This film represents my devotion to do whatever it is I want to do. *Last Will* is highly unorthodox in many respects, not least because it is, in part, an experiment with literary techniques. This is obviously a risky proposition for a film, but I am very glad I was able to do it because many filmmakers – I would even say the majority of them – never get to make the movies they really want to make.

Tell me about working with Julian Richings. Not everyone knows his name, but they will most likely recognize his face.

Julian has appeared in two of my films now and I plan on making good with my promise to him to include him



Julian Richings as the Rahn Brothers

in every film I ever do. This man is the ultimate professional, exceptionally talented, completely photogenic and a wonderful guy. Hard to beat that combination.

As someone who is in contact with other filmmakers and has a finger on the pulse of horror here in Canada, what are your thoughts on the future of Canadian horror cinema?

Canadian horror cinema has a punk-rock future, and what I mean by that is that young, independent filmmakers are starting to have confidence in their ideas – ideas that are irreverent and largely disinterested in "Canadian filmmaking" as such. They just want to participate and make movies they want to see, and they're connecting with an international audience. It's an exciting time.



(2014)

WOLFCOP

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR LOWELL DEAN

CANADA DOES NOT SHARE THE UNITED STATES' LONG-STANDING TRADITION OF WEREWOLF COMEDIES – or werewolf movies at all, for that matter. Sure we have the trio of *Ginger Snaps* films, which all have some dark humour, but the Americans have been far more prolific with *The Werewolf of Washington* (1973), *Teen Wolf* (1985) and its sequel, *Full Moon High* (1987), *Cursed* (2005) and the classic UK-lensed *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). So, the prize for the first-ever Canadian werewolf comedy goes to 2014's *WolfCop*.

Moulded in the style of '80s horror-comedies, *WolfCop* is the story of a small-town policeman – the aptly named Lou Garou (Leo Fafard) – who drinks too much and, to the chagrin of the police chief (Aidan Devine), doesn't share the same work ethic as his partner, Tina (Amy Matysio). When he responds to a call about a shindig in the woods, Lou is knocked unconscious and subjected to a strange ritual performed by hooded figures. The next day, he awakens to find a pentagram etched into his chest and experiences heightened senses. Later at the town bar, Garou is engaging in his favourite pastime when he goes to the washroom and, under the effects of the full moon, transforms into a hairy beast. The uniformed werewolf first takes on some lowlifes at the bar, later with the help of his outcast friend Willie (Jonathan Cherry), he hits the streets to go toe-to-claw with armed robbers and drug-dealing bikers (ripping off a few limbs and a face along the way), but also finds himself going up against some shapeshifters of another kind.



Filmed on a budget of roughly $1 million, *WolfCop* is the second film from writer/director Lowell Dean and the first project to be produced by the CineCoup Film Accelerator – an online initiative launched by Vancouver entrepreneur J Joly, which lets filmmakers compete for up to $1 million in funding and guaranteed theatrical screenings for their indie project. Dean, who is working on a sequel at the time of this interview, shares some of the hairy details.

How did you come up with the character and concept of WolfCop?

The idea for *WolfCop* came to me as I was about to write my first screenplay. I had a few different ideas in development, most notably a cop film and a were-



Leo Fafard as WolfCop

wolf film. Of those two projects, I was having a hard time deciding which to put my focus into. I jokingly suggested to a friend that I should merge them together so I could do both. As ridiculous as the idea was, once I had the image of a "WolfCop" in my head, I was addicted to it.

At what point in the project did you contact CineCoup?

After I wrote my first draft, my Saskatchewan producers and I shot a concept trailer. We wanted to showcase the style of our film, raise awareness, and hopefully financing. While we were researching online for possible funding sources, we came across the pilot program for the CineCoup Accelerator. One of their submission requirements was a concept trailer and a script, so we felt like it was fate! We had to enter.

What was required of you once you became involved in the competition?

Ninety teams from across Canada entered, produced mission videos and rallied for votes. At the end of three months, one team was chosen to have its film produced – and screened in Cineplex theatres. It was a very intense process. [But] the exposure we gained during CineCoup would have been worth it for our team, even if we weren't the one selected.

With a healthy budget for an indie film, was it still a tough shoot?

We were racing the clock each day, dealing with bad weather – as we shot in Saskatchewan during the winter – and a shoot that was heavy in practical effects, fights and stunts. These things usually take a lot of time to get right, and we had very little time. Our production was seventeen days long, and we had to get through six pages of script each day. It was a marathon.

You used practical effects and makeup for the werewolf transformation. Was that a budgetary decision, or an aesthetic one?

Using practical effects was an aesthetic decision. Even if we had a much larger budget, we would have done as much in-camera as possible. Emerson Ziffle, our practical effects artist, and I mapped out all the effects gags, many before the script was even complete. A digital transformation would have felt out of place in an '80s-themed werewolf film!

In addition to the movie, there's also a* WolfCop *comic book and action figure. Do you see it branching out into still other forms of media?

I certainly hope so. I think WolfCop is a character that is ripe for franchising. I truly believe that is how we sold CineCoup in the first place. I really hope we see a *WolfCop* video game soon, and more action figures and graphic novels. The more the merrier.

What has the reaction to* WolfCop *– both the film and the character – been so far?

In terms of a general reaction, there has been far more positivity than negativity, which surprises me every day. I wasn't expecting this many people to "get" our little, weird Canadian werewolf movie.


PHOBIA
A terrifying psychological thriller.
HELLMOUTH
SEIZURE
SO FRIGHTENING YOU'LL NEVER RECOVER.
VISITING HOURS
MONSTER IM NACHTEXPRESS
"When I'm President of this university....
...there will be no hatred, no violence, no drinking of blood ...In fact, I'll be the only creature
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IN COLOR
MICHAEL IRONSIDE
WATCHERS



AFTERWORD:

BY PAUL CORUPE
FILM JOURNALIST AND CREATOR OF CANUXPLOITATION.COM

THE WORLD OF CANADIAN FILM CAN BE A COLD AND UNFORGIVING PLACE, and it's been especially hard on our horror film output over the last 50 years. Surviving decades of offhanded dismissals by many of those who helped shape our nation's filmmaking history, Canada's legacy of chilling cinema has found renewed vigour in recent years. Once considered throwaway fare, films such as *Videodrome*, *Black Christmas* and *The Gate* have become classics – works that reliably draw audiences decades after they were made. Not only do these films continue to challenge perceptions of Canada's cultural preoccupations, they also provide us with a better understanding of our current horror movie boom.

It wasn't always like this. In the fifteen years since I began writing about Canadian genre film on my website, Canuxploitation.com, I've seen how the view of our nation's homegrown horrors has evolved. Granted, it's been slow in coming, hampered by entrenched beliefs about what Canadian film should strive for rather than what was actually happening. This disconnect is one of the reasons I started exploring the topic. I also was interested in why Canada didn't seem to celebrate and rediscover its genre film history in the same way that critics in Indonesia, Turkey, Mexico and Japan were beginning to at the time.

This seemed strange, given that the '70s and '80s saw Canada's genre film production explode. But, looking back, I found that most critics dismissed these films as Hollywood copycats or, at worst, a waste of taxpayer-provided arts funding. When I actually started watching these movies, though, I was captivated by a body of films that display an incredible range in quality, vision and approach.

The home-video revolution has been vital in raising the profile of Canadian horror. Where these movies were often briefly dumped in local theatres before disappearing, VHS, DVD and now Blu-ray have greatly helped audiences discover – and rediscover – the gems of the genre. Everything from the genuinely creepy *Pin: A Plastic Nightmare* to enjoyable trash such as *Rock 'n' Roll Nightmare*, from satanic chillers like *The Pyx* to giant monster romps like *Yeti: Giant of the 20th Century*, are now easily accessible.

The availability of these films has led to an avalanche of new critical writing and information about them – including the publication you hold in your hands. Back in 1999, I scoured libraries for any tidbits on these films, often coming up empty-handed. Thankfully, Caelum Vatnsdal's 2004 book *They Came From Within: A History of Canadian Horror Cinema* presented, for the first time, a chronological account of how many of these movies came to be. These days, the Internet is just as important for discussion about Canada's best-known horror films, and it's an invaluable source of info on locally-shot obscurities such as *Corpse Eaters*, *Science Crazed* and *Sexcula*.

Audiences have changed, too. Those that helped nurture the birth of modern Canadian cinema in the 1950s were careful to differentiate Canadian films from their Hollywood counterparts, but for a new generation weaned on VHS, content trumps patriotism. Canadian horror fans watch *My Bloody Valentine* and *Prom Night* not because they were shot locally, but because they're genre classics. Modern critics, too, have been increasingly kind to these films, which seem to thrive in the cultural consciousness even when last year's art-house hit fades from memory.

In addition, many of Canada's young horror filmmakers have made their mark on the international stage. Shortly after I started Canuxploitation, *Ginger Snaps* became a cult hit. More recently, Canadian directors including Jason Eisener, the Soska sisters and the Astron-6 collective have made movies that are not only aware of Canada's horror film past, but sometimes pay homage to it. And, thanks to festival programming such as the Toronto International Film Festival's Midnight Madness series and Montreal's Fantasia, these newer homegrown horrors get to unspool on the big screen in front of appreciative viewers.

Not only have these changes helped reshape the way Canadians understand and see these films, but they've also piqued the interest of cinema junkies in other parts of the world. No longer a source of critical embarrassment, it's now up to audiences and filmmakers to ensure that, after a chilly initial reception, Canadian horror films will still be welcome around the fire.



FURTHER VIEWING

13 EERIE (2013)
Starring Katharine Isabelle, Michael Shanks and Brendan Fehr
Directed by Lowell Dean

5150 RUE DES ORMES (2009)
a.k.a. 515D Elm's Way
Starring Marc-André Grondin, Normand D'Amour and Sonia Vachon
Directed by Éric Tessier

AFFLICTED (2013)
Starring Derek Lee, Clif Prowse and Michael Gill
Directed by Derek Lee and Clif Prowse

ALTITUDE (2010)
Starring Jessica Lowndes, Julianna Guill and Ryan Donowho
Direct by Kaare Andrews

BEYOND THE BLACK RAINBOW (2010)
Starring Eva Bourne, Michael Rogers and Scott Hylands
Directed by Panos Cosmatos

BLACK ROSES (1988)
Starring John Martin, Ken Swofford and Sal Viviano
Directed by John Fasano

BLEEDERS (1997)
Starring Rutger Hauer, Roy Dupuis and Jackie Burroughs
Directed by Peter Svatek

BLOOD RELATIONS (1987)
Starring Jan Rubes, Lydie Denier and Kevin Hicks
Directed by Graeme Campbell

BLOOD SYMBOL (1992)
Starring Micheline Richard, Trilby Jeeves, Anne-Marie Leduc
Directed by Maurice Devereaux and Tony Morello

THE BLUE MAN (1985)
a.k.a. Eternal Evil
Starring Karen Black, Winston Rekert and John Novak
Directed by George Mihalka

THE BRAIN (1988)
Starring Tom Bresnahan, Cynthia Preston and David Gale
Directed by Ed Hunt

THE CARPENTER (1988)
Starring Wings Hauser, Lynne Adams and Pierre Lenoir
Directed by David Wellington

CHAINED (2012)
Starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Julia Ormond and Eamon Farren
Directed by Jennifer Lynch

CITY IN PANIC (1986)
Starring David Adamson, Lee Ann Nestegard and Edward Chester
Directed by Robert Bouvier

THE CLOWN AT MIDNIGHT (1999)
Starring Christopher Plummer, Margot Kidder and Sarah Lassez
Directed by Jean Pellerin

THE CLOWN MURDERS (1975)
Starring Stephen Young, Lawrence Dane and John Candy
Directed by Martyn Burke

THE COLDNY (2013)
Starring Kevin Zegers, Laurence Fishburne and Bill Paxton
Directed by Jeff Renfroe

THE CLUB (1993)
Starring Joel Wyner, Andrea Roth and Kim Coates
Directed by Brenton Spencer

THE DARK (1993)
Starring Stephen McHattie, Cynthia Belliveau and Brion James
Directed by Craig Pryce

DECOYS (2004)
Starring Corey Sevier, Stefanie von Pfetten and Kim Poirier
Directed by Matt Hastings

DEVIL'S MILE (2014)
Starring David Hayter, Mana del Mar and Casey Hudecki
Directed by Joseph O'Brien

THE DROWNSMAH (2014)
Starring Michelle Mylett, Caroline Korycki and Gemma Bird Matheson
Directed by Chad Archibald

EXIT HUMANITY (2011)
Starring Mark Gibson, Brian Cox and Dee Wallace
Directed by John Geddes

FDDD DF THE GDDS II (1989)
Starring Paul Coufos, Lisa Schrage and Réal Andrews
Directed by Damian Lee

FULL CIRCLE (1977)
a.k.a. The Haunting of Julia
Starring Mia Farrow, Keir Dullea and Tom Conti
Directed by Richard Loncraine

GRAVEYARD ALIVE: A ZDMBIE NURSE IH LDVE (2003)
Starring Anna Day-Jones, Karl Garhardt and Samantha Sian
Directed by Elza Kephart

THE HDUSEKEEPER (1986)
a.k.a. A Judgment In Stone
Starring Rita Tushingham, Ross Petty and Shelley Peterson
Directed by Dusama Rawi

IF A TREE FALLS (2010)
Starring Breanna TeBoekhorst, Jennifer De Lucia and Daniel Zuccala
Directed by Philip Carrer

JUHIDR (1984)
a.k.a. A Cut Above
Starring Suzanne DeLaurentiis, Linda Singer and Jeremy Ratchford
Directed by Jim Hanley

THE KEEPER (1976)
Starring Christopher Lee, Tali Schreiber and Sally Gray
Directed by T.Y. Drake

THE KISS (1988)
Starring Joanna Pacula, Meredith Salenger and Mimi Kuzyk
Directed by Pen Densham

MARK DF CAIH (1985)
Starring Robin Ward, Wendy Crewson and Antony Parr
Directed by Bruce Pittman

HIGHT DF THE DEMDHS 3 (1996)
Starring Larry Day, Amalia Kinkade and Kris Holden-Ried
Directed by Jimmy Kaufman

DF UNKNDWH DRIGIH (1983)
Starring Peter Weller, Jennifer Dale and Lawrence Dane
Directed by George P. Cosmatos

DTTD: DR, UP WITH DEAD PEDPLE (2008)
Starring Jay Crisfar, Marcel Schlutt and Nicholas Fox Ricciardi
Directed by Bruce La Bruce

PSYCHIC (1991)
Starring Zach Galligan, Catherine Mary Stewart and Michael Nouri
Directed by George Mihalka

PSYCHD GIRLS (1985)
Starring John Haslett Cuff, Darlene Mignacco and Rose Graham
Directed by Jerry Ciccoritti

RETURH DF THE RADIDACTIVE REPDRTER (1990)
Starring David Scammell, Kathryn Boese and Randy Pearlstein
Directed by Craig Pryce

RIPPER: LETTER FROM HELL (2001)
Starring A.J. Cook, Bruce Payne and Ryan Northcott
Directed by John E. Eyres

SEIZURE (1974)
Starring Jonathan Frid, Martine Beswisk and Hervé Villechaize
Directed by Oliver Stone

SEVERED: FDREST DF THE DEAD (2005)
Starring by Paul Campbell, Sarah Lind and Julian Christopher
Directed by Carl Bessai

SEXCULA (1973)
Starring Debbie Collins, Jamie Orlando and John Alexander
Directed by Bob Hollowich

SHADDW DF THE HAWK (1976)
Starring Jan-Michael Vincent, Marilyn Hassett and Chief Dan George
Directed by George McCowan

SLASHERS (2001)
Starring Sarah Joslyn Crowder, Kieran Keller and Tony Curtis Blondell
Directed by Maurice Devereaux

STAGE FRIGHT (2014)
Directed by Minnie Driver, Meat Loaf and Allie MacDonald
Directed by Jaroma Sable

TERMIHAL CHDICE (1985)
Starring Joe Spano, Diane Venora and David McCallum
Directed by Sheldon Larry

THINGS (1989)
Starring Barry J. Gillis, Amber Lynn and Bruce Roach
Directed by Andrew Jordan

TUCKER AND DALE VS. EVIL (2010)
Starring Tyler Labine, Alan Tudyk and Katrina Bowden
Directed by Eli Craig

THE VIHDICATDR (1986)
Starring David McIlwraith, Teri Austin and Richard Cox
Directed by Jean-Claude Lord

WHY HDRRDR? (2014)
Starring Tal Zimerman
Directed by Nicolas Klaiman and Rob Lindsay

WDLVES (2014)
Starring Jason Momoa, Lucas Till and Merritt Patterson
Directed by David Hayter

YETI: THE GIANT DF THE 20TH CENTURY (1997)
Starring Antonella Interlenghi, Mimmo Craig, Jim Sullivan
Directed by Gianfranco Parolini (credited as Frank Kramer)

ZDMBIE NIGHTMARE (1987)
Starring Adam West, Jon Miki Thor and Tia Carrere
Directed by Jack Bravman



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— JAMES WORRELL

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